

# LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF Famous Americans

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## Other Famous Americans

Additional sketches of *famous Americans* will be found in the following volumes of the LIVING BIOGRAPHIES series:

*American Statesmen*—Roger Williams, William Penn, Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, John Adams, John Marshall, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, Andrew Jackson, Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, Charles Sumner, Abraham Lincoln, Jefferson Davis, Grover Cleveland, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

*Famous Women*—Susan B. Anthony, Frances E. Willard, Isadora Duncan, Ernestine Schumann-Heink, Jane Addams, Evangeline Booth, Helen Keller.

*Great Philosophers*—Ralph Waldo Emerson, William James, George Santayana.

*Great Scientists*—Louis J. R. Agassiz, Charles P. Steinmetz, Albert Einstein.

*Famous Novelists*—Nathaniel Hawthorne, Mark Twain.

*Great Poets*—William Cullen Bryant, Edgar Allan Poe, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, John Greenleaf Whittier, Walt Whitman.

*Religious Leaders*—Brigham Young, Mary Baker Eddy.

*Great Painters*—James A. McNeill Whistler, Winslow Homer.



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# Introduction

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AS POINTED out in the eleventh volume of our biographical series—LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS MEN—the first ten volumes were devoted to personalities grouped together according to their pursuits or professions. For example, the first volume dealt with Great Painters; the second, with Great Composers; the third, with Great Philosophers; and so on, through the ten volumes. In the eleventh volume we modified the arrangement as follows: instead of grouping a number of men under a *single category*, we there included the men who had not fitted into any of the *other categories*.

In this, the twelfth volume, we continue the arrangement of the eleventh. Just as the previous book was devoted to *Famous Men of all categories*, this present book is devoted to *Famous Americans of all categories*—inventors like the Wright Brothers and Thomas Edison, actors like Edwin Booth and Will Rogers, pioneers like Daniel Boone, industrialists like Rockefeller and John Jacob Astor, military leaders like John Paul Jones and Robert E. Lee, statesmen like Sam Houston and William J. Bryan, patriots like Tom Paine and Patrick Henry, composers like Stephen Foster,

## INTRODUCTION

and exponents of the American idea of justice like Oliver Wendell Holmes.

Famous builders, most of them, either on the mental or the moral or the physical plane. Creatures and creators of the democratic tradition of free development under free institutions. Leaders who have helped to fashion America into the great melting pot of the ages—the crucible in which the old world is reborn into the new world. The pioneers in the divine experiment to establish an international nation in which men of all names and all creeds—men like Kelly, Martinez, Bianchi, Sadowski, Tomlinac, Baker, Wiederorfer, Lindsey, Fournier, Lopez, Bjorkland, Smith and Thompson\*—can live together and work together and, if need be, fight together as free and friendly brothers of one American family.

H.T.

D.L.T.

\*These are the names of some of the American soldiers who have won the Congressional Medal in World War II.

**PATRICK HENRY**

*Important Dates in the Life of Patrick Henry*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1736—Born, Hanover County, Va.                               | Made Commander-in-Chief of Virginia Troops.                           |
| 1754—Married Sarah Shelton.                                  | 1776—Elected Governor of Virginia. Reelected three times.             |
| 1763—Distinguished himself in "Parsons' Cause."              | 1787-88—Championed "Bill of Rights" amendments to U. S. Constitution. |
| 1765—Elected member of House of Burgesses.                   | 1799—Died, Charlotte County, Va.                                      |
| 1774—Served as member of First Colonial Congress.            |   |
| 1775—Made famous "Give me liberty, or give me death" speech. |   |

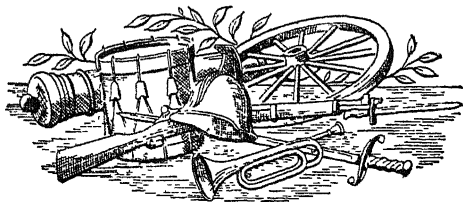


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# Patrick Henry

1736–1799

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**S**PRINGTIME in Virginia. From the dusty roadway a boy of ten answered friendly greetings. He wore his good humor as carelessly as the clothes that draped his lanky form.

Who, in this world of exuberant nature, could remain closeted in a stuffy schoolroom? Certainly not Patrick Henry, whose aversion to books was as strong as the urge to roam the fields and the forests.

Young Pat was prepared for any eventuality. From his shoulder dangled a fishing rod; his right arm loosely supported a gun; his pockets bulged with corn pone and cold pork. Ahead stretched a day of uninterrupted idleness. A day to be spent face downward by some whispering stream, or prone upon a bed of pine needles, a time to give himself up to being and seeing—what more could anyone ask of life?

But perfection is a gift which cannot long endure. A dark cloud obscured his sky. If Patrick wouldn't attend the local school, declared his father, then he must study at home. No use to gaze wistfully toward the woodland. The textbooks lie open before you, and your father and your uncle stand at your elbows. Best to apply yourself, Patrick. Show them that you have not dis-

graced your intellectual heritage. Prove to them how quickly you can absorb these dry facts. Perhaps in that way you will earn a bit of leisure for the *real* business of living.

Five years, and the text books had yielded up their treasure. The hunger for the countryside had to wait for the casual stolen moments, for now Patrick was apprenticed to a country store-keeper. A year later he was the owner—neither pleased nor proud—of a store which his father had bought for him. As partner he had his brother—who possessed even less aptitude for business and a greater distaste for work than Patrick himself. A few months saw the complete ruin of their venture. But bankruptcy sat lightly on Pat's shoulders. The world was too full of music, dancing and pleasant conversation to leave time for worry over the unimportant matter of earning a livelihood.

At eighteen a new and tumultuous emotion seized him. He fell in love with, wooed and won Sarah Shelton, and found himself faced with the problem of supporting a family. Rendered by love more impractical than ever, Pat smiled happily into a penniless future. The young man's unfailing high spirits were irresistible, even to strangers. How, then, could doting parents resist the appeal of these unworldly love-birds? Pooling their resources, the two families bought them a plantation consisting of a few acres and six slaves.

In this latest venture Patrick proved himself quite as improvident as in the past. Two short years were all that he required to accomplish a perfect failure. Selling his slaves, he invested the money in goods for a new store. Failure again. Yet never had man a more indulgent wife than Sarah. Her faith in him was absolute. Serenely she watched his capital pouring into a dying business. Together they gazed fondly at their growing brood, and then smiled confidently at each other. At last Destiny herself caught the infection of their smile. Erasing the frown from her face, she gave a reassuring nod in their direction.

## II

THOUGH he disliked his studies, Patrick Henry had the gift of concentration. Within a few weeks he could acquire the knowledge that it took the average man a number of years to absorb. He also was gifted with the power to sway an audience—whether to smiles or to tears—as spirit and conviction moved him. These qualities he determined to bring to the study and the practice of law. After a few months of steady application, he presented himself before the examiners at Williamsburg—he was twenty-four at the time—seeking a license to practice at the bar.

A strange figure he made before the board—untidy, awkward, and unpolished in his speech. They looked askance at the would-be barrister from the backwoods. But once having listened to him, they were compelled to admit that here before them stood something big in the making. Upon a promise from him of further study, the examiners granted him a license. That is, all the examiners but one. The elegant John Randolph refused even to interrogate this presumptuous country bumpkin who had rarely seen the inside of a classroom. But struck by the clear logic and the compelling eloquence of the boy, he invited him to his home. There followed four hours of conversation, in which two great intellects met and played a merry game of tag. They touched upon ideas far beyond the range of law. It was an admiring Mr. Randolph who signed the document admitting Patrick Henry to the bar. And it was an elated Patrick who received the following tribute from him: "If your industry be only half equal to your genius, I augur you will do well, and become an ornament and an honor to your profession."

A complete switchabout, and fate kept her promise. Kept it, that is, with the most able assistance from Patrick Henry. With the selfsame zest that he had formerly applied to his loafing, he now devoted himself to his work. And from the first moment that he hung out his shingle, he enjoyed a flourishing practice.

For the word had spread throughout the countryside that victory had chosen to perch upon the eloquence of Patrick Henry.

Yet with all his legal practice, Henry found the time to lend a hand in the tavern of his father-in-law. He was able, too, to repay that gentleman's former kindness with material help.

A completely changed young man. The idler who had dreamed the sunny hours away was now as industrious a man as ever Mr. Randolph could have hoped to see. His maturity had brought along with it a newly-developed interest—in books. Never a voracious reader, he kept near him a few classics which he constantly re-read. The most often scanned and the most deeply appreciated of these was his Bible.

### III

SUCCESS—and shortly thereafter, fame. It was the celebrated "Parsons' Cause" that made Patrick Henry an influence to be reckoned with. His first *big* case. The parsons of Virginia were being supported by a tax levied on all the colonists. Some of the colonists objected to this tax on the ground that they were not interested in the church and therefore they saw no reason why they should be compelled to sustain it. The clergy, on the other hand, complained that they were not being paid enough. The king of England took the side of the clergy. He ordered the colonists to give them an additional sum of money. This the colonists refused to do, and the case came up in the courts. Patrick Henry was retained to defend the people against the clergy, or rather the people against the king.

On the day of the trial the court was packed. The clergy were represented by Judge Peter Lyons, who was regarded as the ablest lawyer of the colony. He made a powerful plea in behalf of his clients and sat down amidst a buzz of admiration. Folding his hands over his immense belly—he weighed almost three hundred pounds—he looked on with a disdainful smile as the awk-

ward young "country bumpkin" stood up to present the case of the people against the Crown.

Patrick Henry began in a slow and hesitant manner. He had to fumble for his words. It was evident that he was suffering from stage fright. But suddenly he became fired with his own enthusiasm. He straightened up and seemed to grow taller and more majestic. A torrent of lava poured from his lips. It is the business of the king, he cried, to *protect* his people, and not to *enslave* them. If the king fails in his duty to his people, then it is the duty of the people to disobey the king. But, he concluded, if the judges dared not go against the will of the king, then let them find for the plaintiff. Let them award to the clergy the verdict of a small, nominal sum.

The judges took him at his word. They awarded to the clergy the sum of *one penny*.

He enjoyed the acclaim he received as a result of this case. It was necessary, he said, to gain popularity in order that he might sway men in the right direction. "I know of no moral principle by which I was bound to refuse a fee (from the people as against the clergy)."

His reputation spread far beyond Virginia. And, loyal to his word, Patrick Henry forever after allied himself with the under-dog—sought justice for the common man.

When he took his seat in the House of Burgesses, he caused no particular stir. The only comments that he occasioned were expressions of scorn over his untidy attire, and a snicker or two over his ungainly behavior. No one associated him with the young lawyer whose voice was already ringing through the colonies.

When the House adjourned, the seasoned members of that body looked at one another in bewildered questioning. How did it happen, they asked, that this apparent nobody had under their very noses taken the reins into his own clumsy hands? Had carried every resolution and motion which he had proposed?

Shaking themselves loose from the spell into which the young

orator had cast them, the conservatives hurled invectives against his vanishing back. With great unconcern, Patrick strolled through the street, saddle-bag dangling from his arm. Politics for the moment forgotten, he mounted his horse. Man and mare turned toward the fields and the rivers of the countryside.

Whistling a gay tune, his thoughts on rod and gun, he was startled by the ovations that awaited him at every crossroads. It was no longer "Idle Pat, the ne'er-do-well dreamer," but "Patrick Henry, the resolute Champion of the People."

And it was as the Champion of the People that he returned to assume the leadership of the House of Burgesses. On that issue he divided not only the House but the entire population of Virginia. His fiery eloquence left no middle ground. On the one side stood Patrick and the common man; on the other, the aristocracy and the adherents of the Crown. Virginia had awakened to the first faint rumblings of the coming storm.

#### IV

GREAT EVENTS generate great leaders. Such was Patrick Henry. Not once did he doubt the rightness of his cause nor waver in his battle for the right. And in the heart of the people there was no doubt as to their leader. As the seething caldron of America boiled over into revolution, his purpose strengthened; and his strength drew along with it the masses, sublime in their loyalty.

Steadily he rose in power; and in rising, he became the target of vituperation from envious men. Brushing aside the arrows as he would the stings of a swarm of unimportant insects, he strode calmly and surely toward his goal.

Virginia, like her sister colonies, protested the Stamp Act; but once it had been passed, the majority accepted the inevitable. Not so Patrick Henry. Raising his voice in a denunciation that rang through the colonies—and echoed even to England's shores—he "gave the signal for a general outcry all over the Continent."

Events began a swift march toward the day of reckoning.

## PATRICK HENRY

Patrick Henry put himself gallantly in the forefront. As member of the Committee of Correspondence, he helped to forge the chain that linked colony to colony and thus made possible the concerted action which brought final victory.

As Virginia's representative he attended the First Continental Congress. At Mount Vernon he stopped for a visit with George Washington, and together they completed the journey to Philadelphia. Destiny's sons, rushing eagerly to meet her and to become the men of the hour.

The Congress had heard of Patrick Henry's reputation as a lawyer and orator. But this assembly was to witness yet another side of his genius. His practical statesmanship enthralled his cohorts and drew admiration even from his opponents. "There was not one member, except Patrick Henry," wrote John Adams, "who appeared . . . sensible of the precipice, or rather pinnacle, on which we stood, and had candor and courage enough to acknowledge it." Statesmen of long standing gave ground before his logic and eloquence.

And though firm in his purpose, he was fair to his opponents. "We may as well go home," remarked a member from Virginia, "for we are not able to legislate with these men." Whereupon Patrick Henry declared: "We do not mean to harm even our rascals, if we have any." And many of the "rascals" yielded to his generosity and went over to his side.

Back to Virginia, where he found trouble with the Indians. Patrick sought justice for the Red Man as staunchly as for the White. Inter-marriage and assimilation would be the proper cure for the discord between the races.

The Negro, too, held a high place in his esteem. And though Patrick himself bought and sold the African captives, he considered black slavery a necessary evil in a false civilization. Often and ardently he spoke of a day when the enslaving of human beings—of whatever color—would be abolished.

## V

THE SMOLDERING embers flare up, the brew of rebellion bubbles on. Tirelessly Patrick Henry breathes life into the sparks. On a fateful day in Richmond he listens to the frightened legislators who argue for appeasement. He rises at last to speak, summoning all the eloquence at his command.

"We are apt to shut our eyes against a painful truth, and listen to the song of that siren till she transforms us into beasts . . . Suffer not yourselves to be betrayed by a kiss . . . We must fight! . . . An appeal to arms, and to the God of hosts, is all that is left us . . . Gentlemen may cry peace, peace; but there is no peace . . . The next gale that sweeps from the North will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms . . . Our brethren are already in the field . . . Why stand we here idle? . . . Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? . . . Forbid it, almighty God! . . . I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!"

Spent in emotion, he resumes his seat amidst a deep silence, head resting in his hands. And as he rests after his supreme flight, the flame of the rebellion bursts in all its fury. Stirred by his powerful words, Virginia resolves to arm herself, to accept the coming struggle, to prepare herself for her defense.

Elsewhere, too, the flames leaped high. Congress sent forth an appeal to arms. From every corner of the continent the answering shout rang back. America was arming. Higher the flames and hotter the brew, seething to scald tyranny away from the American shores.

On every village green the militia was training for action. Patrick Henry was chairman of the committee for arming and disciplining the recruits. His men followed him with unswerving devotion. He was commander-in-chief of Virginia's forces.

A time came when Patrick Henry was to put to the test the



loyalty of his men. Gunpowder stolen from stores at Williamsburg lay aboard the English schooner, *Magdalen*. As time passed and no move was made to restore the stolen powder, Patrick Henry became furious. Summoning his troops, he marched on the Capitol with a view either to recover the stolen property or else to seek reprisal on Crown property. As his troops marched on, the magic of his name drew enthusiasts into the ranks until the number of civilians following them had reached five thousand.

And even the British yielded to the magic of his name. Lord Dunmore, having received news of the oncoming horde, dispatched a messenger with money in payment of the gunpowder. Patrick Henry halted his troops and accepted the payment amidst triumphant shouts. "All the tyrants fear him, all the free men adore him!" A leader in action as well as in speech.

## VI

THE DAY for action had arrived, and Patrick Henry rose valiantly to greet the dawn. At Williamsburg he placed himself and his troops in readiness, eager for the fray. But disappointment awaited him. Power to act was given to his next in command. One affront following another, he came to realize that his superiors had rejected him as a soldier. With good grace he resigned.

His officers bade him farewell in a touching address: "Your withdrawing yourself from the service fills us with the most poignant sorrow, as it at once deprives us of our father and general . . . May your merit shine as conspicuous to the world in general as it hath done to us."

And Patrick Henry replied to his officers in kind: "I leave the service, but I leave my heart with you. May God bless you and make you the glorious instruments of saving our country."

Not so calmly, however, did the rank and file accept his dismissal. They threatened mutiny. But he managed to quiet them.

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS AMERICANS

No one man mattered, he told them; it was the common cause which all must consider. Each one of them must do that for which he was best fitted, and he must do it well.

And what were the objections to him as an officer? That "he had regarded his soldiers as so many gentlemen who had met to defend their country, and exacted from them little more than the courtesy that was proper among equals." This, perhaps, was not the quality necessary in a soldier. But certainly it was the stuff of which Democracy is made.

At home, in Hanover County, more sorrow awaited him. His beloved Sarah was dead. He mourned her loss deeply. Not all the companionship of his six children could fill the empty rooms, nor their loving solicitude fill the emptiness in his heart.

But his period of mourning was brief. For, though his country had spurned his services in the field, she had great need of him in the council chamber. Now that even the timid no longer feared the word *independence*, Virginia voted to elect her own Governor, instead of accepting Britain's appointee, as in the past. The logical man—Patrick Henry. Elected by an overwhelming majority, he took his oath of office on July 5, 1776. The First and Second regiments of Virginia paid tribute to their one-time leader, assuring him: "Our hearts are willing, and our arms ready, to maintain your authority as Chief Magistrate."

For some weeks he was unable to assume his gubernatorial duties. Lying ill of a slow disease which attacked his vitals, he fretted at the enforced inactivity. The day he had so long foreseen was come; and though he might not lead his troops into battle, he was anxious to help pilot the ship of state through the stormy seas of the Revolution.

Able at last to take residence in the Governor's Mansion, he gave to the office the devotion and the skill which had marked his entire career. And he graced this office for three terms.

## VII

GRACED it literally. Gone were the nondescript clothing, the ambling gait. Patrick Henry took his Governorship in the proper spirit. Attired meticulously in black and scarlet, a white wig framing his sharp humorous features, he played well the part of First Citizen of Virginia. There was a carriage now for the Governor's family. But Patrick Henry was rarely seen inside of it. Idle hours by field and stream were far away now, and there was little time for romping with his children. But, country born, he did manage the time for exercise. While the family took its daily airing in the carriage, Governor Henry strolled leisurely through the streets of the Capital. No greeting failed of a warm reply, but a new and gracious dignity now marked his friendly words.

No item was too small for his consideration where the welfare of his countrymen was concerned. Abstemious himself, he watched with dismay the growing drunkenness as war spread over the continent and scattered restraint to the winds. Rum, he declared, must be replaced by a less intoxicating beverage. Importing malt and barley—and a Scotch couple to blend them—he introduced the brewing of small beer. To set the fashion, he served it at his own table, himself taking an occasional glass.

A simple, dignified, sedate life. But underneath the calm surface lay harassment. War requires men, food, and clothing—more and more and more of them all the time. General Washington kept on beseeching him for additional troops. With Virginia already practically stripped of its male population, Governor Henry reached into the hinterlands, and by sheer will power met the demands.

Hard labor, and little reward. He had become the target of ugly slander. There were those who whispered that he would make himself Dictator—Patrick Henry, who could not treat even those under his command as other than equals!

## VIII

IN THE MIDST of his troubles, a breath of spring came to his winter heart. He married Dorothea Dandridge, bringing to the Governor's Mansion a gracious hostess and to his family a devoted wife and mother. He had need now of comforting companionship in his home; for again and again he was obliged, through illness, to absent himself from his office.

In the meantime, the clouds of war were growing steadily darker. British troops were pressing over colonial borders. British ships were forging into Virginia waters. Realizing that through Virginia lay the enemy's pathway to the South, Patrick Henry worked with superhuman energy to strengthen her defenses.

At the conclusion of his third term as Governor, he was invited to serve a fourth term. But overwork had begun to tell on him; and so, reluctantly, he declined. Declined also, to act as delegate to Congress. Having purchased an estate in Henry County, he moved there with his family. His well earned rest was, however, of short duration. Within three months he again took his seat in the General Assembly. For there were critical times ahead. British troops had forced their way into Virginia, were even now searching for her legislators. Having received word that the English were but a few miles away, the legislators disbanded—to re-convene at Taunton. Together with Patrick Henry in this flight were Harrison, Christian and Tyler. Food and shelter were difficult to find. But once more the magic of Henry's name came to the rescue. Hungry and footsore, they knocked at a farmhouse door; and explaining their mission, they received only abuse from an old woman who had answered the knock.

"Be gone, ye cowardly knaves, there's no food here for those who flee the enemy."

"What, then, if Patrick Henry himself were among us?" asked Harrison.

"He'd never have shown himself for such a poltroon."

## PATRICK HENRY

"This is Patrick Henry," Harrison informed her.

"The necessity, then, must have been dire indeed. Enter, gentlemen, and be of good cheer."

### IX

AT LAST the clouds of war disappeared, the thunder of the cannon died away, the sun shone upon a land at peace—America victorious. But Patrick Henry's mind was not at peace. The military generals had done their work well and might seek rest by their firesides. But the political generals had much work ahead—a new form of government to create, a vast country of divergent beliefs to weld into a great Democracy.

America enjoyed peace with the world, but suffered from discord within her own borders. Factionalism, intolerance, envy, misunderstanding, greed. Patrick Henry raised his voice in behalf of *unity and justice for all*. To those who would have banned English immigration, he said: "We have all with which to make a great nation accept the people. Open your doors and they will come. Shall we who have laid the proud British lion at our feet, now be afraid of his whelps?"

There was work to be done, and Patrick Henry pointed out the way. The colonies had become states and must now confederate. But the new constitution was incomplete. It left loopholes that could catch the ankle of the new Republic and, throwing, drag her backward. Patrick Henry spoke, he wrote, he held tenaciously to his purpose. And it was his militant agitation and effective criticism that brought about the adoption of the series of amendments to the constitution known as the Bill of Rights.

At long last, however, he found the time to play in the fields and the woods. White haired and sparkling and gay, he romped—whenever his illness allowed him—with his grandchildren. The disease which all-too-frequently gnawed at his vitals made it impossible for him to lie down. At such times he slept sitting

in a chair. When well, he often directed his field hands from a hillside, the great voice penetrating for half a mile or more without effort. Visitors often found him propped against a tree, a jug of cool spring water by his side; or on the floor with the children, playing a violin—each vying with the rest as to which of them could produce the greatest noise.

Patrick Henry loved Virginia and rejoiced in her prosperity. But he detested the golden leaves—of tobacco—that were the source of her wealth. He would not permit smoking in his home. His family enjoyed the spectacle whenever he detected the aroma on the breath of some servant and then, guided by his keen sense of smell, unearthed a hidden pipe. Lifting the offending object gingerly between thumb and forefinger, he would toss it into the fire and carefully wash his hands.

Patrick still retained his law practice. He had regained most of the fortune that he had lost during the years of his public service. He was anxious to leave his family well provided. But he took only those cases which he felt were worthy of his championship. And his championship in a cause was almost always sufficient to insure its success.

He did most of his legal work in his "study"—a small cottage he had built in the rear of the big house. He approached the study through a long avenue of black locusts. While preparing a case, he would closet himself in the study or, wrapped in a shawl, pace the avenue, book in hand. To his family he declared that never again would he engage in a public career, "unless compelled by some unlooked for circumstance to make a transient effort for the public safety." To all public inducements offered him, he replied that his "advanced age and increasing debility" compelled him to say no. His old friend, George Washington, had not forgotten him, would have showered him with honors, but he refused all offices and honors.

As age and illness crept on, the habits of his boyhood reclaimed him. Once more careless in dress, he allowed the cultivated dignity of his middle life to drop from his shoulders like an uncom-

fortable cloak. And the still bright blue eyes twinkled merrily beneath white brows.

When pleading a case, he was often obliged to rest his head on the table. Energetic young lawyers looked skeptically at the untidy bundle of shawls and the trembling hands. It seemed unbelievable that this could be the famous Patrick Henry. But a few words from those magic lips, and every eye and ear were strained in his direction. He had created whatever mood he desired. He was still the mighty orator who had set a nation free.

## X

OLD AGE NOW, and a great hunger for rest. But fate had other plans for Patrick Henry. The "unlooked for circumstance" had arisen. From Washington he received an urgent request to take office, if not in Congress—which would carry him too far from home—at least in the Virginia Assembly.

America's foreign relations were far from cordial; war with France appeared imminent. Patrick Henry's influence was essential to counteract the activities of those factions which were busily at work fomenting trouble. "Your weight of character . . . in the House of Representatives would be a bulwark against such dangerous sentiments as are delivered there at present," wrote Washington. It was more than a request from one statesman to another; it was the appeal of a friend and patriot, and old Patrick bowed his head in humble acceptance of the duty his country had placed upon his shoulders.

As the news spread through town and country that Patrick Henry would once more speak, excitement grew. When, from the porch of a tavern, he made his campaign speech, it was a vast multitude that he addressed. Addressed it, held it, swayed it.

But the effort had been too great. The frail, overtaxed body gave way, and Patrick Henry was carried from the tavern to his home. There, propped in a chair, unable to lie down at all, he spent his remaining days.

When the illness had reached its final stage, Dr. Cabell offered him a dose of liquid mercury.

"I suppose, doctor, that this is your last resort?"

Dr. Cabell nodded. "Then excuse me for a minute, please." Patrick drew a silk cap over his eyes and offered a simple prayer for his family, his country, and his own soul; then quickly he drained the vial. Rushing from the room, Dr. Cabell threw himself upon the grass to weep for a dear friend and a great man.

Returning, he found Patrick watching with interest the blood congealing under his fingernails and solacing the gathered family. Placing a hand upon the head of a weeping child, the dying man comforted her. "Be thankful for the kind God who allows me to go thus painlessly." The hand slipped down.



**THOMAS PAINE**

*Important Dates in the Life of Thomas Paine*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1737—Born, Thetford, England.  | 1792—Published <i>Rights of Man</i> .                 |
| 1774—Came to America.  | Went to France; became member of National Convention. |
| 1774-76—Edited <i>Pennsylvania Magazine</i> .                              | 1793—Expelled from Convention.                        |
| 1776—Wrote <i>Common Sense</i> .<br>Joined staff of <i>General Green</i> . | Imprisoned in the Luxembourg.                         |
| 1777—Wrote <i>Crisis</i> .   | 1794-1807—Wrote <i>Age of Reason</i> .                |
| 1779—Became secretary to Committee of Foreign Affairs.                     | 1794—Released from prison.                            |
| 1787—Went to Europe, with model of iron bridge.                            | 1802—Returned to America.                             |
|  | 1809—Died, New Rochelle, N. Y.                        |

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# Thomas Paine

1737-1809

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CAGE LANE, Thetford, England, is a short street at the end of which stands a meeting house. On a Sunday in 1774 the sedate Quakers, in decent gray, gathered quietly at its portals. In a small garden, halfway down the lane, a tall, lean man watched the procession. His shrewd, long-nosed face was sad; but his lips were softened into a tolerant smile. It was a long time since Tom Paine had bidden farewell to the faith of his fathers. Through the years his mind had ventured into the realms of thought, seeking a religious truth greater than sects. And now he was bidding farewell to the *homeland* of his fathers.

He patted his pocket, making certain that his letter was safe. A letter of introduction from Benjamin Franklin, who was living in England at the time. Tom Paine thought of their many talks, and of Franklin's encouragement. America was a new land, where men's minds were open to new ideas—where resolute spirits were needed and would find response. Truly the place for an inspired adventurer whose life was dedicated to his fellow men.

He strolled slowly to the back of the house, to stand before the grave of a crow. He smiled in reminiscence. At eight he

had already questioned the religious formulas taught him, had doubted the vengefulness attributed to the Almighty—and in that mood of doubting irony had carved an epitaph upon the tombstone of the bird:

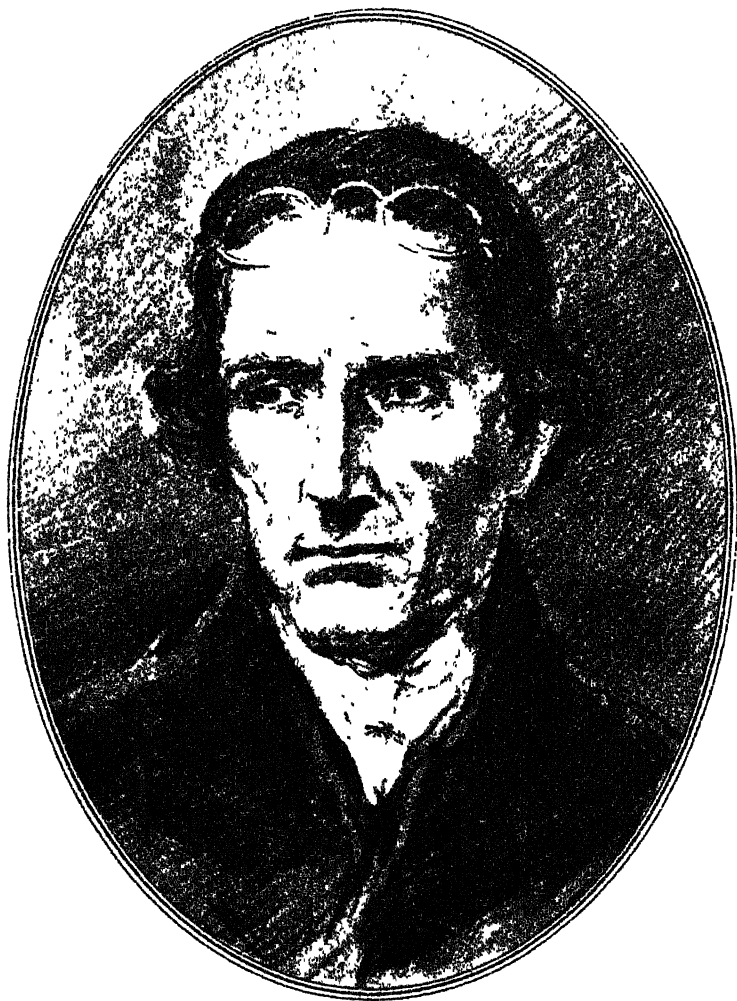
*Here lies the body of John Crow,  
Who once was high, but now is low;  
Ye brother crows, take warning all,  
For as you rise, so must you fall.*

And now, in review, the events of his life passed before his mind's eye. As corset-maker, like his father before him, he had worked here and there about England. As assizeman he had felt the injustice of the long hours and the small pay of the government clerks. But his petitions to Parliament had proved of no avail.

About the garden he wandered, saying goodbye to all his childhood haunts. His mind then traveled on to his courtships and his marriages. An orphaned servant girl had been his first wife. She had died within a year. His second marriage, to Elizabeth Ollive, had lasted three years and then, quietly and with mutual consent, had been dissolved.

Breaking a twig from an apple tree, he snapped the wood into bits, rolling them in his palm. How inevitably his life had led up to this moment of leave-taking! Swashbuckling rover on the high seas of the intellect, bodily he was an ascetic—his only sensual pleasure a deep love of nature.

It's hard to leave the familiar crucibles in which our daily lives have been molded. A small sadness smote him as he closed the gate for the last time and strolled down the street. But exultation sped him on. He had heard the call of America, where men's destinies were being decided. A growing country which, like unshaped clay, awaited the creative influence of minds like Thomas Paine's.



*Patrick Henry*



*Thomas Paine*

## II

A GREAT GIFT was Thomas Paine's—the ability to analyze a situation and to translate the salient fact into living words. In pithy, epigrammatic sentences he reached the people with a language comprehensible to the least of men. No small voice in the wilderness his, but the voice of destiny pointing out the straight path through the maze of bewildering events and conflicting causes.

From Cage Lane to Philadelphia was a logical and not too drastic transition. From the street of Friendly Devotion to the city of Brotherly Love. In Philadelphia Tom Paine found himself comfortably surrounded by the familiar Quaker gray. Having sworn allegiance to the State of Pennsylvania, and having assured himself of a livelihood through tutoring, he wielded his pen in the cause of justice. His terse, pungent phrases fell on fertile soil. In his fight for the truth, he spared neither riches nor rank. For a pen name he adopted the picturesque caption, *Common Sense*, and he bombarded the colonists with a barrage of thought-provoking pamphlets. How, he challenged America, could she justify her fight for freedom, when she herself was indulging in the traffic of Negro slaves?

As tension grew, and the inevitable day of reckoning approached, his pen flew ever faster. His impassioned words penetrated even to the shores of England, kindling into fire the sympathies of those who championed America's right to independence. "The American cause is the cause of God and humanity," he wrote, "and God will separate America from Britain."

And now the thunderclouds had burst and America was riding the whirlwind of open revolt. As cannon and musket fire reverberated over the once quiet countryside, a new emotion stirred within the heart of Tom Paine. The man of peace, who but lately had exhorted his Quaker brethren not to kill, now laid down his pen to take up a gun. With George Washington and his ragged

troops, he experienced all the horrors of war: the near starvation—the bitter cold that froze men's bodies—the bitter defeats that froze their souls.

One day, shortly before the fateful Christmas that turned the tide of war, the Continental army was bivouacked near the Delaware River, across from the English-held city of Trenton. With sinking heart, George Washington had observed the ill-fed and poorly equipped soldiers deserting in ever increasing numbers. Tom Paine realized that his country still needed the service of his pen. Laying down his sword, he clasped the mightier weapon. There in the snow, by a flickering campfire which threw ghostly shadows on the bleeding feet of the half starved men—a drum-head for his desk—he penned the immortal words whose meaning grows clearer with the advancing years:

"These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it now deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph."

### III

TOM PAINE's sincerity and quiet humor attracted the attention of the Congressional leaders. "A man to tame the savage heart." And so they took him out of the ranks and sent him to negotiate with the Indians. Seated before their council fires, courteously observing their customs and addressing them as brothers, he was able to secure the respectful coöperation of these proud people.

And of *all* people. Wherever he went, he was met with appreciation. A prophet who found honor in all countries—a citizen of the world, Thomas Paine.

He was secretary of the Committee on Foreign Affairs—a post created at his own suggestion. His flying pen was never still. His ceaseless volley of pamphlets blasted the complacency of the



manufacturers in England. Could they not see, he asked them, that it was to their interest to foster American independence? A *peaceful* America would be a *prosperous* America that would provide a vast market for their export trade.

Upon Lord Howe especially he trained his guns and fired away. Were they not both born Englishmen and writers? Could not the General see that he was battling in a lost cause? How much better, then, to lay down arms and to settle differences by the weapons of common sense!

Another target of his rapid-fire reasoning was Silas Dean. A profiteer, this Dean, wresting a private fortune from the commercial transactions between the Americans and the French. The verbal marksmanship against Silas Dean proved somewhat disturbing to a new and uncertain Assembly. Anticipating a reprimand, Tom Paine resigned his secretaryship.

A discharged soldier without a job. But there was no need for worry. Temperate living and Quaker frugality had stood him in good stead. There was enough money saved to keep him alive while he planned a history of the American Revolution.

But first there was another important pamphlet to be written. The people of America were staggering underneath the taxes imposed by the burden of the war. These taxes, he wrote, could be lightened by levying a duty on liquor and by selling crown lands in Virginia.

This pamphlet done, he paid a visit to the University of Pennsylvania where he was honored with the degree of Master of Arts. And now he was ready for the history.

But his versatile mind could never resign itself to but a single task at a time. He spent his leisure hours in discussing, with William Henry, the marvels of that astounding new giant—steam—whose powers were as yet but dimly glimpsed. Time now to experiment. Together they envisioned the day when this unchained power would speed friendly ships across the seven seas. For Tom Paine's prophetic eye saw a new world—a world bound into a closer unit not only in spirit but in fact.

## IV

THE DESTINIES of Thomas Paine and Benjamin Franklin were inextricably intertwined. From the very first day when the threadbare youngster had stood before America's representative in England, the two lovers of liberty had labored in a common cause. They sought the same end, but with a difference. The portly Franklin, with tongue in cheek, dispensed his puritanic maxims for the masses whilst he himself dallied with the decadent aristocracy. Paine, on the other hand, wrote with a sincerity so deep it lent to his eye an almost fanatical gleam.

"Where liberty is, there is my country," Franklin said.

"Where liberty is *not*, there is my country," Paine replied.

Together they had drafted a new constitution for the state of Virginia. Now they had come to France to negotiate a loan for the newborn Republic, each working in his own way. Franklin paced out a minuet in gilded and tapestried salons, kissing titled hands and regaling royalty with his salty humor. Paine spent his time amongst the people, writing and speaking at every possible opportunity, unsparing of himself in the pursuance of his goal. He lived and worked in meager lodgings.

At last Benjamin Franklin and Tom Paine accomplished their purpose. At Brest a ship lay at anchor, laden with silver. On the morrow she would set sail for the States. Paine's eyes turned wistfully toward the white cliffs of Dover. He longed to take his ideas to England, to stir in the hearts of his former countrymen the will to freedom. Reluctantly, however, he allowed himself to be persuaded that England was not ready, and that America still had great need of his services.

There was much to be done. A liberal Society of Political Study had to be organized. The Bank of North America had to be curtailed in its activities so that it would not threaten the very structure of the Republic.

And the young Republic offered tangible proof of its apprecia-

tion for his services. The state of New York presented him with a mansion in New Rochelle. Its two hundred and seventy-seven acres spread graciously about the fine stone manor. Pennsylvania made him a gift of twenty-five hundred dollars. Another grateful constituency gave him a splendid horse—a luxury for which he had always yearned.

And now a new idea had gripped this amazing adventurer of the spirit. He declared that iron could be built into bridges that would safely span the widest of rivers. Taking a model made by his friend, John Hall, Paine set sail for Europe to find backers for his bridge. The voice that had fomented political revolution was now enlisted in a cause that would one day, he hoped, revolutionize industry.

## V

THE WORLD was ripe for progress. The imagination of the people, especially in France, had become inflamed with Tom Paine's exhibition of the new bridge—a structure that in a single arc could link shore to shore. The ninety-foot model of this projected bridge drew enormous throngs. So popular had this "eighth wonder of the world" become that the admission fees alone paid for the entire construction.

England, too, was quick to perceive the possibilities of this hitherto unexploited metal. Contemplating the hundred-and-twenty-foot model on view in that country, manufacturers and merchants realized that a new field of endeavor had been opened up to the inventive genius of man.

While in England, Paine paid a short visit to Thetford, attending the funeral of his stepmother. Again he reflected upon the narrowness of some of the religious sects. "If the taste of a Quaker could have been consulted at the Creation, what a silent and drab-colored creation it would have been! Not a flower would have blossomed, nor a bird been permitted to sing."

He returned to the exhibition. But in the midst of the popular

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS AMERICANS

approval of his bridge, he yearned for the fresh green fields of America. Longed for an early morning canter with his horse, Button. His new project had been successfully launched. Time now to go home and rest and play.

A sudden eruption—and all thought of play was erased from Tom Paine's mind. The smoldering volcano of French discontent had finally burst into revolt. The Bastille had fallen!

No one was more sensitive than Tom Paine to the implications of this startling event. It meant another forward step in humanity's heroic battle for freedom. Wherever liberty's flag was unfurled, there Tom Paine was ready to serve. He decided to remain in France.

To George Washington he wrote that he hoped soon to see the day on which the French people would march in triumph through the streets of Paris. On that day he, Tom Paine, would be in the vanguard "holding aloft the American flag, shouting aloud a cry to arms" to which all the world must hearken and respond.

Surely, he felt, England must now see that liberty for all men was the coming order. Setting aside his bridge building for the present, he took up his pen and poured out a new flood of pamphlets not only into France but into England as well. Now at long last he could do for Britain what he had done for America. His barbed words whizzed about the head of George III. "Why pay impoverishing taxes to keep upon the throne a foreign brute that, like a paralysis, sits astride your bright land?"

The king trembled; and with him, all the lords and masters of privilege throughout the world. Tom Paine had become a marked man.

## VI

HE WAS EVERYWHERE, this gaunt pamphleteer. Side-curved and powdered, he was the center of the intellectual life of London. He was most often to be found at the bookshop of Thomas Rich-

## THOMAS PAINE

man—the center of an admiring group. His nimble mind played over the contemporary scene, carrying his listeners into a future full of inspiration and hope. He held these small gatherings spellbound with his anecdotes and his brilliant epigrams. But for platform speaking he had no talent. His was the still small voice of reason and not the thundering bluster of the orator's command.

And so he went on, in his quiet way, to reason the world into a new era of justice. He penned and published a New Testament for thinkers—*The Rights of Man*—and rocked two continents to the very foundations. He dedicated the work to that gallant friend of freedom, Lafayette—"in gratitude for your services to my beloved America."

There was no mincing of words in this revolutionary book; its import was all-too-clear. He spoke of the "ridiculous insignificance into which all literature would sink were their authors made hereditary; and I carry the same idea into governments." Bewigged heads bent over these passages, beringed hands wrote the word *sedition* across the pages.

Paine had stirred England as mightily as ever he wished, but in the process he had achieved a martyrdom for himself. Great applause from the liberals who hailed him as a Messiah, and violent execration from the royalists who denounced him as a dangerous radical. They burned him in effigy and then pelted him with stones. Before his lodgings they staged many a riot. Heaving missiles, they failed to shatter his spirit.

And then came the climax. Through the mob an officer of the King pressed his way. A loud knock upon the door, and in an ominous hush Paine received the summons to trial, charged with sedition.

## VII

TO THE CHARGE Paine pleaded not guilty. Fearing, however, that this firebrand might slip through their fingers, King and Court hastened the trial.

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS AMERICANS

In the meantime, a world-shaking upheaval had taken place across the channel. France had been declared a Republic. Paine was elected a member of the Assembly. What now did the trial of one man matter? Republicanism was on trial, and Paine must go to plead its cause. Aided by his many friends, he eluded the police and set sail for France.

As the boat ploughed through the choppy water, Paine grasped the railing and steadied himself against the pitching of the deck. Unmindful of the present, he projected his vision to travel ahead. Of what concern to him were riots and demonstrations? Behind him lay Britain with her social conscience now fully awake; ahead of him loomed France, where revolution had raised the common man into a position of power. And beyond stirred a small but powerful country that might some day join her larger sister-republics. Surely it was not too much to dream of—a United France, England, Holland and America. And from that dream was it not possible for the imagination to leap to a still greater vision—all mankind united into a federated Republic of the World?

After that, the next step was logical and inevitable. Away with sects and narrow creeds, in whose name neighbor shuns neighbor and nation wars against nation. The entire human family must remold itself into the image of one God whose word is Love . . .

But what were those guns on the shores of France? What were those mobs that gathered at the dock? The name they shouted from hoarse throats was "Paine, Paine!" More rioting? No, not that. They were the citizens of France, proud in their new estate, come to welcome the newest member of the Assembly—to voice their appreciation of the friend whose courageous pen had helped them through the hours of their greatest tribulation.

In triumph they escorted him to the waiting coach, showering gifts and praises upon him. For a moment those glittering eyes were dimmed by a happy tear and that athletic frame was bowed beneath a storm of emotion.

## VIII

IN PARIS, he was overwhelmed with honors and banquets and parades. To his lodgings came the cream of intellectual France. In the Assembly his words were greeted with joyful shouts. On the surface, all was serenity and peace; but underneath, the practiced eye could see the preliminary stirrings of a new tidal wave.

And the wave was to break sooner than he had expected. In the Assembly he pleaded for the life of Louis XVI. The deposed king was now powerless, he argued. Of what benefit would his death be to the Republican cause? "Send him to America. Give not the Tyrant of England the triumph of seeing the man perish on the scaffold who has aided my much-loved America to break her chains!" Coldly Danton replied that revolutions are not won with rose water.

Danton and Robespierre had gained in power, firing the people with a thirst for blood. With bowed head and a sense of defeat, Paine contemplated the execution of the French king. The Reign of Terror had begun. As the fury mounted, the guillotine was scarcely ever still. The people danced madly through the streets, drunk with blood. Little by little Paine withdrew from public life and secluded himself within his apartment. In his small garden he received those who had retained their sanity in the midst of this dance of death. There they indulged in quiet games and discussed a future when the world once more would come into the possession of its senses. Some solace he found in the flowering fruit trees and the blossoming vines of the garden. But the echoes of the tempest beyond the walls penetrated even to this peaceful retreat.

Added to this was a tempest now blowing in from London. In his absence Tom Paine was tried and found guilty. A price was set on his head. Condemned by the reactionaries in England, unheeded by the radicals in France, Tom Paine found himself a

commander without an army—a lone soldier enlisted in a battle for common sense.

A courageous fight, in which Tom Paine was determined never to yield an inch. He secluded himself from his friends and sat down to write the *Age of Reason*. Into that pamphlet he poured all his spiritual passion for a sane and sober world.

Arrest cut short this labor. Giving the manuscript into the keeping of his friend, Barlow, Paine was incarcerated in the Luxembourg Prison—a victim of the French terrorists who preached the doctrine of salvation through blood.

## IX

TERROR reigned supreme, and Paine was subjected to one of its cruelest manifestations. In the dead of night the guards removed a number of prisoners, herding them like cattle to their execution. At bedtime every prisoner retired with the thought that tonight it might be his turn. Anxious ears strained for the sound of footsteps that would mean death. Under this tension, tortured nerves made sleep impossible, and sensitive minds broke down.

Paine wrote to his old friend and comrade in arms, George Washington, to intercede in his behalf. But Washington was now courting England and Paine's letters went unnoticed. Under these harrowing conditions—the uncertainty of his fate, the dampness of the prison and the ingratitude of man—the powerful intellect of Tom Paine could no longer urge the body onward. He succumbed to a raging fever, out of which the devoted attentions of the prison doctor drew him back to partial health.

In direst distress now, Tom Paine petitioned James Monroe, the American ambassador to France, to get him sugar, soap and a few candles. Monroe secured more than these homely articles for the petitioner—he secured his release. For eighteen months Paine remained a guest in the home of his benefactor. With boundless hospitality, Monroe made possible his final recovery and the completion of his work on the *Age of Reason*.



But his generation had drifted into an age of *un-reason*. People everywhere, even in America, were tired of revolution. Other times, other interests, but the same old snobbery of class distinction. A new aristocracy had arisen, founded upon wealth. Tom Paine's call to clear thinking and plain living was drowned out in the blatant shouting of the money marts. What people wanted was not a new approach to God, but a new scramble for gold. Tom Paine's book fell upon heedless ears. Another prophet forgotten in his own day.

## X

TOM PAINE was now preparing for his final journey—saddened by the outcome of the struggles to which he had given so unreservedly of himself. "While I beheld with pleasure the dawn of liberty rising in Europe, I saw with regret the luster of it fading in America."

Stones and jeers awaited him in the country to which he had consecrated his life. His plea for a higher interpretation of religion was misinterpreted as a descent into the "gutter of atheism." People pulled their skirts about them as he passed by.

But he went doggedly ahead. He founded a movement in America—"to place *essential* religion in radiance and reverence." He named this organization the *Theophilanthropist Society*—a body dedicated to the love of humanity and God. The society was suppressed.

He retired to the seclusion of New Rochelle—to dream of a day when men would have saner heads and more understanding hearts.

The spirit had grown too tired to carry on; disillusionment had taken too heavy a toll. He fell into an apoplectic paralysis from which he never recovered. Nursed by a blind old woman, he lingered for a while. But, unable to take nourishment, he sank gradually.

The release came on June 8, 1809. He left to the world a handful of rags and a heritage of reason.



JOHN PAUL JONES

*Important Dates in the Life of John Paul Jones*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1747—Born, Scotland.  | 1778—Commanding the <i>Ranger</i> , conquered British sloop-of-war, the <i>Drake</i> .              |
| 1759—Went to sea.   | 1779—Took command of the <i>Bon Homme Richard</i> . Captured British war-ship, the <i>Serapis</i> . |
| 1766—Became chief mate of a slave ship.   | 1788—Served under Catherine of Russia.  |
| 1768—Became captain of a trader.  | 1790—Went to France.  |
| 1773—Came to America.   | 1792—Died, Paris, France.   |
| 1775—Appointed lieutenant in Continental navy. Took command of brig-ship, the <i>Providence</i> . |   |
| 1776—Commissioned captain in navy.  |   |

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# John Paul Jones

1747–1792

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IT WAS a strange destiny that pursued the life of John Paul Jones. In war he never suffered a defeat, and in peace he rarely won a victory. A peculiar paradox of a man—dainty as a woman, ferocious as a tiger, naïve as a child—a man of great sadness and not a little madness. His role as a romantic adventurer was regal and reckless and swift. “I will not have anything to do with ships which do not sail fast,” he once wrote, “for I intend to go in harm’s way.” Always he went in harm’s way, and always he came out bloody and unbowed and ready for the next fight. And all the reward that he ever got for his triumphant fights was a frosty “thank you” followed by a winter of neglect.

## II

FROM his infancy he was driven by a “great and mighty restlessness.” He inherited this restlessness from his mother, Jeanne MacDuff—“a Hieland lassie” with a strong Gaelic strain in her blood. His father, John Paul, was a Scotch landscape gardener, a prosaic but gritty product of the soil. It was his mother who

gave him his love for adventure. His cradle songs were not lullabies of gentle relaxation, but ballads of impetuous motion.

*Come hither, Evan Cameron,  
Come stand beside my knee;  
I hear the river roaring down  
Unto the wintry sea.*

His formal schooling was of the scantiest. Almost as soon as he learned to read a book, he learned to row a boat. The family of John Paul was none too blessed in worldly goods. There were seven children to support, and the boys were compelled to help replenish the larder out of the waters of Solway. At twelve he was an expert boatman. One stormy day in the summer of 1759, a number of villagers were attracted to a fishing yawl that was trying to make the shelter of a creek against a stiff northeaster. Among the spectators were John Paul and a visiting ship-owner by the name of James Younger. "I'm afraid they'll never make it," said Mr. Younger, as he watched the "crew"—a young boy who was steering and handling the sheets, and a grown man who was "trimming" the boat by sitting on the weather-rail.

"You're wrong, sir," observed John Paul. "They'll make it all right. That's my boy steering."

As soon as the boat was landed, Mr. Younger offered the "little captain" a berth as master's apprentice on his new brig, the *Friendship*, which was about to sail for Virginia and the West Indies. A tempting offer, not only to young John Paul, but to his parents. For this voyage would give their boy the opportunity to visit his eldest brother, William. A successful young man, this brother Will—the adopted son of a rich plantation owner, William Jones, and the manager of Mr. Jones's huge colonial estate in Virginia.

The parents yielded to Mr. Younger's suggestion; and John Paul, a sturdy though undersized little fellow of twelve, got his first salt taste of the sea.

Arrived in Virginia, he so ingratiated himself with everybody

at the plantation that Mr. Jones offered to adopt him also. But John Paul refused the offer. "Thank you, sir, but I am afraid I am too fond of my ship."

So back to the ship he went; and so rapid was his seafaring progress that at 17 he was appointed second mate, and at 18 first mate. The following year, when Mr. Younger retired from the shipping business, he presented John Paul with a sixth interest in a ship called *King George's Packet*. "This, my boy, for your faithfulness and intelligence as a seaman."

And so we see John Paul, at 19, launched upon a new adventure as part owner—and first mate—of a merchant ship.

And the merchandise? Black slaves from Africa. A none-too-savory, but in those days considered a perfectly legitimate, business. Two profitable voyages to Africa, and John Paul had had enough of slaving. He sold his interest in the ship for a thousand guineas (about \$5000), and paid a visit to his brother in Virginia.

Another offer of adoption, another refusal, and John Paul set out for England in the brig, *John o'Gaunt*. A sad voyage; yet it turned out to John Paul's advantage. An outbreak of yellow fever, which carried off all but five of the sailors, including the captain and the mate. John Paul took charge of the ship, brought it safely to Whitehaven, and received as a reward a ten-percent share of the cargo.

Thus far his career had been stormy, but safe. But now there came upon him the first of his many misfortunes. It happened during one of his voyages in the *John o'Gaunt*. An epidemic of fever had reduced the crew to five men. One of these men, a mulatto by the name of Mungo Maxwell, had mutinied; and Captain Paul, in an effort to keep the mutiny from spreading, found it necessary to punish the culprit with a belaying-pin. Shortly thereafter, Maxwell died. John Paul, upon his arrival in port, surrendered to the authorities, made a full statement, and was ordered to stand trial for wilful murder on the high seas.

*Prosecuting Attorney:* "Captain Paul, are you, in conscience,

satisfied that you used no more force than was necessary to preserve discipline in your ship?"

*John Paul:* "I would say that it became necessary to strike the mutinous sailor, Maxwell. Whenever it becomes necessary for a commanding officer to strike a seaman, it is also necessary to strike with a weapon. I may say that the necessity to strike carries with it the necessity to kill or to completely disable the mutineer . . ."

The court acquitted him of wilful murder. John Paul felt vindicated and subdued. He was resolved never in the future to strike any man under his command. And he stuck to this resolution for the rest of his life. From that day on, he ruled his men through the persuasiveness of his talk rather than through the power of the whip.

But for a while he felt a bit nauseated with the idea of ruling men on the high seas. For there was a feminine softness at the core of this resolute man of steel.

### III

A CHANGE of occupation, and a change of name. Old William Jones had died (1760) in Virginia, leaving his entire estate to John Paul's brother, William. He had made John Paul, however, the residuary legatee in the event of his brother's death, provided John Paul would assume, like his brother, the name of Jones. In the spring of 1873, his brother died; and John Paul, who from that day called himself Paul Jones, became the owner of a Virginia plantation consisting of "3000 acres, 20 horses and colts, 80 neat-cattle and calves, sundry sheep and swine, and 30 Negroes."

Paul Jones proved himself, both to his white neighbors and to his Negro slaves, an exacting, generous, aristocratic democrat. Like the fringe of land which he owned between the forest and the sea, he was a perfect blending of the wilderness and the garden. And a perfect "catch" for the young ladies of Virginia.



A gay life of boating and dancing and drinking and flirting at the carefree age of twenty-eight in the carefree atmosphere of a colonial plantation. A stormy affair with Betty Parke, a relative of Martha Washington's—and then the call of a greater storm.

Paul Jones was not unprepared for the coming storm of the Revolution. In his leisure hours he had attended the sessions of the Virginia House of Burgesses and listened to the eloquence of Patrick Henry and to the logic of Thomas Jefferson. Fine men, these homespun Americans, so different from the snobbish officers of the British army and navy! Paul Jones had had a scuffle with one of these naval officers at a public ball in Norfolk. "This officer, Parker by name"—we are quoting Paul Jones himself—"declared that in case of a revolt or insurrection it would be easily suppressed, if the courage of the Colonial men was on a par with the virtue of the Colonial women! I at once knocked Mr. Parker down . . ."

Paul Jones was certain, in the event of a showdown, as to which side he would take. On April 21, 1775, he was on a visit to New York. And there he heard the astounding news that made the heart leap. The Battle of Lexington. America had decided to be free!

He returned home and offered his services to the Continental Congress. "It is, I think, to be taken for granted that there can be no more temporizing . . . Nothing now is in store for us except either war to the knife or total submission to complete slavery . . .

"I cannot conceive of submission to complete slavery; therefore only war is in sight . . .

"Such being clearly the position of affairs, I beg you to keep my name in your memory . . . and in any provision that may be taken for a naval force, to call upon me in any capacity which your knowledge of my seafaring experience and your opinion of my qualifications may dictate."

He was able to offer to the American cause more than his seafaring experience. In his trips to the various countries he had

picked up not only an ability to speak foreign languages, but a capacity to handle foreign men. He would be an ideal master of a heterogeneous crew. Moreover, his active mind had absorbed a knowledge of navigation unsurpassed in his own day. He was a student not only of the open sea but of the open book. His was that rare blending of genius—a scholarly head and an impetuous heart.

Vaguely, though not fully, aware of his genius, the Continental Congress invited him to express his views on the organization of an American navy and the selection of its personnel. He outlined his views in a long and carefully studied report. The report was approved. The navy was organized. And then, to add gall to his glory—a bane that was to pursue him to the end of his days—he was appointed to the subordinate post of first lieutenant in the new fleet.

A keen blow to his hopes. But Paul Jones took it in stride. "I am here to serve the cause of human rights, not to promote the fortunes of Paul Jones." On February 17, 1776, Lieutenant Jones set sail on the *Alfred*, one of the four ships of the pioneer American fleet. The captain of the *Alfred* was Dudley Saltonstall, a fine gentleman but mediocre sailor. A brief cruise of seven weeks, an unsuccessful brush with the British sloop of war, the *Glasgow*, and Captain Saltonstall was temporarily retired from active service. This "demotion" of Saltonstall led to a reshuffling of the naval personnel and to the promotion of Paul Jones to a captaincy.

And then began a *real* cruise for Paul Jones. The *Providence*—the ship of which he was now the commander—set sail on June 14, 1776; and before she returned to port, she had defeated sixteen British vessels, of which eight were sunk and eight manned out of the meager crew of the *Providence* and sent in as prizes to America.

A triumphant voyage, a sad return. During his absence his plantation had been destroyed by the Tory soldiers under Lord Dunmore. This misfortune, too, he took in stride. "It appears,"

## JOHN PAUL JONES

he wrote to his friend Joseph Hewes, a member of the Continental Congress, "that I now have no fortune left but my sword, and no prospect except getting alongside the enemy."

"Getting alongside the enemy" was from now on the chief pursuit of his life.

### IV

ON NOVEMBER 7, 1776, he set out on an enemy hunt as the commander of his old ship, the *Alfred*. A short cruise of only five weeks, and a "bag" of seven British ships.

And then he was assigned (June 14, 1777) to a still more important ship, the *Ranger*—an assignment which Paul Jones regarded as the greatest distinction of his life. For the circumstances of the assignment, inadvertently perhaps, linked his name forever with the birth of the new Republic. A twofold resolution passed by Congress, not in honor of Paul Jones but in an effort to transact as much business in as short a time as possible:

"*Resolved*, That the Flag of the Thirteen United States of America be Thirteen Stripes, Alternate Red and White, and that the Union be Thirteen Stars in a Blue Field.

"*Resolved*, That Captain John Paul Jones be Appointed to Command the Ship *Ranger*."

Paul Jones took this as a sacred omen. "That flag and I are twins; born in the same hour from the same womb of destiny. We cannot be parted in life or in death. So long as we can float, we shall float together. If we must sink, we shall go down as one!"

### V

PAUL JONES had traveled far from his slave-trading days. Though a fighter by profession, he was by nature a man of friendly generosity. And his friendliness extended not only to his equals, but to his so-called "inferiors" as well. In one of his victorious reports to Robert Morris, he cited his entire crew for "extraordinary courage" under fire. "Where all behaved so well, I cannot

bring myself to single out individuals." And yet he goes on to single out three men "who, belonging to races considered inferior, may be more entitled to credit than their shipmates of the higher race. These are Anthony Jeremiah, a full-blooded Narragansett Indian, and Cato Jones and Scipio Jones, Negro boys, formerly my own slaves, but set free by me on the 10th of this month."

His devotion to his sailors inspired an equal devotion on their part. It was this inspiration that turned them into fighting demons, even against the greatest of odds. On April 24, 1778, his little boat, the *Ranger*, ran down and captured the *Drake*, a twenty-gun British sloop-of-war. The entire world rubbed its eyes in amazement at the sight of "a poodle leading a tiger by the leash." It was the turning of a new page in history—the capture of a larger by a smaller ship.

But this was only a rehearsal for a far greater achievement—the capture of a ship afloat, by a crippled ship that was sinking. It was in the famous battle between the British warship, the *Serapis*, and Paul Jones's ship, the *Bon Homme Richard*. The *Serapis* carried 50 guns, throwing 315 pounds of metal in a single broadside. As against this, the *Bon Homme Richard* carried 42 guns, throwing only 258 pounds of metal in a single broadside. An uneven battle. Yet Jones loved uneven battles. "Where's the fun when my opponent isn't stronger than myself?"

The battle began on Thursday, September 23, 1779. "Sea smooth"—we are quoting from the log of the *Serapis*—"moon full, sky clear, time 7:15 P.M. We hail the enemy, the enemy answers with a broadside." A furious fight, the two ships sailing side by side, answering broadside to broadside. Heavy shots from the *Serapis*, weak barks from the *Richard*. "Many of our guns were smashed, or else so jammed as to be unserviceable," reports Henry Gardner, the quarter-gunner of the *Richard*. "Of the 140 officers and men stationed on the main gun-deck, 80 were killed or wounded. The whole deck was slippery with blood and littered with fragments of heads, bodies, and limbs."

At this rate, the end is just a matter of minutes. Something

drastic must be done. Paul Jones barks out a command. "Let us close with the enemy. We must get hold of him!"

A reckless maneuver, but it's the only chance. Paul Jones sails close to the *Serapis*, spans out the grappling hooks, and pins the enemy ship alongside of his own. The *Richard* is now a wreck. The wheel has been shot away, the masts are gone, the sides are gaping with holes. The ship is beginning to list.

*Captain Pearson*, of the *Serapis*: "Are you ready to surrender?"

*Paul Jones*: "No, I have just begun to fight!"

And now he is not only directing the fight, but showing them how to do it by his own example. Six marines are busy loading their muskets and handing them to the Commodore. And Paul Jones, as rapidly as he receives them, fires them from the shoulder and speeds every shot along with an air-splitting oath. By Jove, not a man but a flame! A spirit of vengeance disguised in human shape for the righting of human wrongs!

And still the battle hangs in the balance. But now a lucky chance turns the tide in our favor. A lucky chance, and the dare-devil skill of Midshipman Fanning of the *Bon Homme Richard*. Once more, let Gardner tell the story:

"Fanning lay out on the yard-arm of our ship. The hatch of the *Serapis* was not entirely open, the cover only having been slewed around, probably by one of our shots earlier in the action, leaving a triangular opening about two feet at the widest part. As the ships were rocking in the swell, it took a pretty good aim to throw a grenade through so small an opening. Still, Fanning did it at the third trial."

A terrific explosion. The hatch flies open, and the air is filled with the fragments of fifty men.

There is no more stomach for fighting on the *Serapis*. "Come on, boys," shouts Paul Jones to his crew, "let's go in!"

They clamber over the sides of the *Serapis*. A half-hearted attempt at resistance, and then Captain Pearson strikes his flag. He surrenders his sword to Paul Jones . . .

The American Commodore was now master of the *Serapis*. From her deck he watched his own ship going down to her glorious grave. "No one," he writes, "was now left aboard the *Richard*, but our dead. To them I gave the good old ship for their coffin, and in her they found a sublime burial. She rolled heavily in the long swell . . . settled slowly by the head, and sank peacefully in about forty fathoms.

"Our torn and tattered flag had been left flying when we abandoned the ship. As she plunged down at the last, her taffrail momentarily rose in the air; so the very last vestige mortal eyes ever saw of the *Bon Homme Richard* was the defiant waving of her unconquered and unstricken flag."

## VI

"THE greatest achievement in naval history!" This was the universal verdict at the time of the capture of the *Serapis*. Yet Paul Jones remained poor and obscure. When he tried to collect the pay for his sailors, he was knocked about from pillar to post. He wrote a volume of letters—to Benjamin Franklin, to Robert Morris, to Arthur Lee, to the leaders of the allied governments of Holland and of France—begging them, arguing with them, accusing them of neglect of their fighting men. But everybody passed the burden along to everybody else. "The whole expense," wrote Franklin in a letter that was characteristic of them all, "will fall upon me, and I am ill provided to bear it, having so many unexpected calls upon me from other quarters." Blank refusals, or else polite promises to pay at some time in the indefinite future. Paul Jones had a twofold obstacle to overcome: the poverty of the exchequer throughout the world, and the thoughtless ingratitude of the human heart.

And in his futile struggle against these two obstacles, his health broke down. "My greatest trouble in those years," he wrote in his journal, "was inability to get sound or refreshing sleep." Continual trips between France and America, America and Holland,

Holland and France. And always the same results—acclamation when he appeared before an audience, neglect the moment he got out of sight.

Yet throughout it all, he retained an irresistible gaiety and gusto for life. His tact, his effervescence, his graciousness and his wit made him a favorite among the ladies. And he was not averse, on occasion, to reciprocate their favors. We have a vivid picture of him at this time, as described in the words of an Englishwoman, Miss Edes-Herbert:

“Having been taught to regard Captain Jones as a rough, desperate renegade, if not pirate, I was amazed to meet a most courteous, graceful gentleman of slight build and rather delicate, not to say effeminate, cast of features, faultlessly dressed, exquisitely polite, altogether handsome, and speaking French fluently . . . By way of compliment, I suppose, he said that, while under the circumstances that existed he was compelled to be indifferent to the estimation in which Englishmen held him, he was as sensitive as ever to the sentiments of Englishwomen; also that, while he might be at war with my countrymen as a nation, he could never be anything but at peace with their daughters . . .”

He was popular with the daughters of Englishmen and of all other men. Queen Catherine of Russia, having heard of this “gallant sea-wolf,” invited him to an important command in the Russian navy. He eagerly accepted the invitation, for he had heard many glowing reports of the “Great Queen.” Driven by his old impetuosity to meet a situation, he made a wild dash for Russia, disregarding ice, snow, personal danger, even death. “You can’t cross the Gulf of Finland,” the natives warned him. “It’s full of ice. Nobody attempts it this time of the year.”

“Well, *I* shall attempt it!” Setting out in a small boat with a number of daredevils like himself, he started the crossing at the dawn of an April day (1788). There was a strong wind blowing from the northwest. In the course of the day, the wind had become a gale; by nightfall it was a tempest. A blinding fury of snow lashed over the unprotected deck. Huge cakes of ice, swirl-

ing together like the jaws of a nutcracker, threatened to crush the boat. "We must turn back," cried the terrified boatmen.

"We will do nothing of the kind!" With pistol in one hand and his other hand on the steering wheel, he held his men to their task until they reached the opposite shore.

A dash through the snow-covered forests of Russia, an enthusiastic reception at the palace—and then, further trouble. Russia was at war with Turkey. The commander-in-chief of the Russian forces, Prince Potemkin, had promised Paul Jones the full command of the Baltic fleet. But, having heard of Catherine's partiality for the "American adventurer," Potemkin gave way to a fit of jealousy. He now offered Paul Jones a divided command—that is, Jones was to share the command with two other men, Prince Nassau and Brigadier Alexiano.

These two colleagues of Paul Jones turned out to be men of feeble hands but of valiant tongues. They let Jones do all the fighting—and much gallant fighting he did!—and then they took upon themselves all the credit for his victories. They poisoned against him the ear of Potemkin, and Potemkin poisoned against him the ear of Catherine. She sent him an order of dismissal, couched in the disguise of a promise for "a better command in a more important field of action."

At first the unsuspicious American admiral, accustomed as he was to honest thoughts expressed in honest words, was unaware of the double meaning implied in the queen's command. He actually believed he was being promoted to a better post. When the truth dawned upon him, he was heartbroken. Catherine had dismissed him in favor of a couple of cowardly braggarts! Desperately he tried to regain the queen's favor. To no avail. Potemkin had done his job. Potemkin, and the British ambassador at the Russian court. They distorted old stories, and manufactured new ones, in order to prejudice the queen against him. They revived the Mungo Maxwell case, they insinuated that Paul Jones was a self-seeking egotist, a bully and a lecherous beast. They concocted a plot which implicated Paul Jones in a fictitious attempt at rape.



In vain the distracted admiral offered irrefutable evidence to disprove every one of the charges brought against him. Queen Catherine believed them and condemned him on all points. Especially on the charge of the alleged rape. Herself the most lecherous woman in Europe, she castigated her own guilty conscience in castigating Paul Jones. "After this nasty incident (of the alleged rape)," she wrote to Baron Grimm, "it would be difficult to find in the Royal Navy a man who would consent to serve under him."

But the men in the Royal Navy thought quite otherwise. To them it was a sad day when he left them. "On this day," one of them lamented, "we have lost our light."

## VII

THE REST of his life was the sinking of the sun in a heavy mist. Illness, poverty, frustration, neglect. But no despair. To the very end he hoped to be recognized for the man he was.

It was not until after his death, however, that this recognition came to him. At his burial in the Protestant Cemetery of Paris (July 20, 1792), a French clergyman referred to him as "one of the first champions of American liberty, one of the first harbingers of the liberty of the world."



# PAUL REVERE

*Important Dates in the Life of Paul Revere*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1735—Born, Boston, Mass.   | Set up powder mill at<br>Canton, Mass.                    |
| 1756—Served at capture of<br>Crown Point.  | 1776—Commissioned Major<br>in Massachusetts Mili-<br>tia. |
| 1774—Patrolled Boston streets<br>to watch British troops.<br>Urged seizure of British<br>military stores at Ports-<br>mouth, N. H. | 1779—Took part in Penobscot<br>expedition.                |
| 1775—April 18—Entered<br>upon famous "Midnight<br>Ride."   | 1795—Laid cornerstone of<br>new State House in<br>Boston. |
|  | 1818—Died, Boston, Mass.                                  |

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# Paul Revere

1735–1818

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**E**IGHT O'CLOCK of a fine clear morning, and all's well!" Along Boston's waterfront trudged the town crier, bell ringing. Tar, fish and rum mingled their spices with the tang of the clean salt air. Sailors from many ports jostled one another, as Fish Street woke to life. "Sweep o' sweep," sang a black boy, brandishing his chimney broom. From the shop of Paul Revere, silversmith, came the clang of metal. The town's artisans were up betimes, and at their tasks since dawn.

By the side of his father, young Paul worked. A swarthy boy, with strength in his stocky frame. A bewigged and powdered gentleman gazed at him in approval. "A likely lad," he observed. "Aye, likely. And industrious withal," agreed the father.

Paul's white teeth flashed in a ready smile. He was a sociable lad, and he liked the shop where usually there was plenty of company. His clever face wore a contented look, for he loved his work. The ring of metal, and the faintly acrid odor—as bellows pumped to a rosy glow the embers in the forge—were well to his liking.

At sixteen, Paul had finished what schooling was available. He was gregarious, and popular with his fellow apprentices. It was a

good mixture that flowed in his veins. The father (christened Apollos Rivoire), refugee from the Huguenot persecutions in France, and the mother, a woman of Yankee stock, had produced fine sturdy offspring. And the finest of them was Paul—honest, fearless and firm.

They were God-fearing, these Reveres, but not bigoted. They attended the church called the *Cockerel*, after the weathervane atop its spire. But the new Christ Church had eight bells in its tower. Enthralled by their soft mellow music, Paul organized five of his friends into a society of bell ringers. A secret society, with badges and salutes. The elders' tales of persecution had left their mark on the new generation.

When Paul was nineteen, his father's death left him head of the family. But adventure called. Turning the business over to his younger brother, he followed fife and drum into the wilderness. The hated French Jesuits in Canada were making trouble, razing border towns and stirring up the Indians. In blue jacket and red breeches, hatchet at his belt, Paul joined the volunteers to battle for the colonists' hard-won privilege to worship as they pleased.

A year of soldiering, and Paul was back at his trade—happy amid the familiar sounds and smells of his shop. He had taken to himself a bride, Sary Orne. Sary was a frail woman, but she knew what was expected of a wife. Skipping the odd numbers, she presented him with a child on each of the even years. Paul loved them all, and awaited every new arrival with impatience. He also loved a ringing song and a "cheerful glass." Every evening saw him at the Green Dragon, or at some other favorite dram shop. After general greetings, Paul could be seen slipping unobtrusively into a back room. There he found his Masonic Brethren and members of other secret orders. Several of these societies were banded together into a league which they had named the *Sons of Liberty*.



*John Paul Jones*



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*Paul Revere*



## II

PAUL WAS INVITED to join the *Long Room*, advisory council of the many secret orders. A tribute to his ability. This group was composed of Harvard graduates, professionals, and men of means. Paul was the only artisan in their midst. Times were bad, unjust taxes were being levied, the stamp act was causing indignation. Everywhere people were muttering.

At the head of the council was Sam Adams. Practical and far-seeing, Adams argued for preparedness. "This state of public submissiveness cannot long endure," he declared. "The colonists must be organized to defend themselves in the eventuality of war." Many people shied away from the "Wild Radical," but Paul Revere stood resolutely by his side. Every new act of oppression swung him more firmly in the direction of revolt.

The stamp act was repealed, and there was great rejoicing. The lukewarm among the Sons of Liberty began to drift away. But Adams and Revere knew that this was merely the lull before the storm. Everywhere there were undercurrents of unrest, street fights, tarring and feathering, threats of death. In the midst of this turmoil Sary completed the pattern of her days. Having presented Paul with a daughter in one of her even years, she died the next. A time of vigorous demands. With a large family to rear, a man could not long grieve for his wife. Within a few months, Paul married Rachel Walker—an intelligent, vigorous woman, with a mind of her own and a tongue that dared to speak. He was delighted with this woman who could "stand up to him."

They were prosperous, the Reveres. For though there was a decline in the silversmithing trade, Paul's Yankee ingenuity had enabled him to add two sidelines to his business. Copper plate engraving, and dentistry. New England was pitifully tooth-shaken, and there was much work for Paul Revere. A simple profession, dentistry, as practiced then. It consisted mostly in extracting the corrupted tooth, and in substituting a tooth from a sheep,

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or part of a walrus tusk. The operation lent an odd appearance to the patient, but enabled him to partake of solid food. Little skill was required for this work, and Paul had but little interest in the performance.

More to his taste was the engraving. Though he never attained real artistry in this handicraft, he did acquire a certain skill. Since practically all the work done was political propaganda, he gave himself with zest to its execution.

Paul had prospered steadily. He now possessed a mare, and had "bult a barne." His political sympathies, however, veered ever more strongly toward the left as the storm gathered for the inevitable crash against England. Paul loved his family, but his love for freedom was even greater. Rachel stood by his side—fit helpmeet for this stalwart son of a stalwart age.

### III

PAUL HAD many calls upon his time. The tea act had again brought together the Sons of Liberty. Ships had lately arrived from England, their decks scarlet with soldiers. These *lobster backs* had come, not to protect, but to police. The townsfolk resented their insolent parade, and streets and taverns were loud with brawling. Even the weaker spirits among the colonists seethed under the insult of the "British invasion." Now it was that the Sons of Liberty had real need of their organization. The tea ships were arriving. The time had come when America must knuckle under, or assert her rights. The colonists demanded that the ships depart from their shores. But there was in effect a law that ships could not sail unloaded. A deadlock? No. The Sons of Liberty had an answer ready for his English Majesty.

Like clockwork the secret society functioned. The grapevine buzzed with instructions. At dusk a crowd of Indians in war paint gathered at the docks. Strange that the populace did not challenge them. Strange, too, that many a white hand and face were visible underneath the Indian trappings. Surely that leader of the

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Mohawks had the figure and stride of Paul Revere. Onto the ships swarmed the "white" Indians. As the town watched in silent approval, the last leaf of tea went into the water. It was more than a bitter cup for his Majesty that had been brewed at that tea party. It was a message to the world that men can organize to combat oppression.

The people of Boston, washing paint from their faces and removing feathers from their hair, prepared for bed. But for Paul Revere there was to be no sleep that night. As Rachel placed cold meat and a flagon of wine in his saddle bag, he tightened his belt and fastened on his spurs. Embracing his "dear girl" and receiving her Godspeed, he swung into the saddle and was off on the first of his many rides. The Courier of Liberty.

To New York and Philadelphia he rode, and back, in twelve days, bringing heartening news. These port towns did not need his warnings that the tea ships might attempt to unload their cargoes there. For already the English ships were anchored at the wharves. But the two cities had sworn to resist this "greatest of all plagues." They voiced approval of the Bostonians' act, and pledged their allegiance in the dark days ahead.

## IV

PAUL FOUND that the New Yorkers "talk quick, and of an altogether." And that the Quakers "are inclined to be cautious." He was almost constantly in the saddle now, riding between the three cities. On each return to Boston, he beheld ominous signs that the crisis was at hand. Many English ships rode at anchor in Boston harbor. There was "not a topsail to be seen—naught save ships of war."

General Gage had replaced Governor Hutchinson and, landing thousands of troops, had declared a state of martial law. Frantically the citizens were laying in supplies. Boston was closed to traffic, and Paul must make his journeys surreptitiously. Sometimes he slipped past the British sentries disguised as a farmer; at

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other times, by means of a boat which he kept hidden at the riverbank.

There were other riders who kept the rebels informed of the British activities. With one of these riders Paul watched the fortifications that were being built by the *lobster backs*. He was unimpressed. "They are mere beaver dams," he scoffed.

"We will kick them over with our stout boots," boasted his companion.

Concord and Lexington were gathering large stores of guns and ammunition. Undoubtedly, therefore, these towns would be the targets at which the British would aim. Signals were arranged. Paul and his fellow riders inside the city were to watch the troops. When they prepared to move, lanterns were to be hung in the belfry of Christ (now Old North) Church. Two lanterns if they left by water; one, if they moved by land.

Tense days now, with troops drilling constantly on the Common. And in the country, British supplies mysteriously disappeared. Food wagons were overturned, flour and bacon hurled into swamps. Paul worked little at his trade, but he kept unrelaxing vigil.

And now a day dawns when the air is electric with suspense. There is movement everywhere. A tense quiet strains nerves as, all day long, Redcoats mass on the Common—hundreds, thousands of them. It is the long-awaited hour. Unseen eyes watch, to note what route the Redcoats will follow. By water! Now the Sons of Liberty slip silently along side streets, each to his appointed task. At a back door, Paul Revere stands waiting in the shadows. He is joined by Robert Newman. Together they hurry to Christ Church. Paul waits below, until Newman hangs the two lanterns in the belfry. Then up another side street he glides and two more conspirators join him. They are to row him across the Charles River, to where his horse is being held in readiness.

But what is this? Our calm Paul so excited he has forgotten the cloth with which to muffle the oars! "'Tis no matter," a companion whispers. "Wait!" Underneath a window he gives a low

## PAUL REVERE

whistle, and a woman's head appears. A few whispered words, a few minutes of suspense, and a ruffled petticoat descends upon their heads.

"It is still warm from the wearer," Paul laughs.

"An ardent-hearted wench," chuckles his companion.

Now they are off again, and rowing under the very guns of the *Somerset*, British Man o' War. From upstream float the sounds of the Redcoats crossing. The three laugh silently, for the slightest sound would sign their death warrant. Across now, and Paul is mounting his horse. Their farewells are heartfelt, for they may be the last; this night's work may cost every one of them their heads.

Off into the path of the pale moonlight and straight into the pages of history gallops Paul Revere.

## V

PAUL'S RIDE was not without mishap. Challenged by two British officers, he easily gave them the slip—his light mare taking to the swamps, where the heavy English animals could not follow. Man and beast blended as one, they sped onward to "alarum every house as far as Lexington."

And now the war had broken out in earnest, and Paul was a marked man. No longer could he go in and out of Boston, but must stay and get whatever news of his family the other blockade runners were able to bring. That same family must be fed. In addition to Sary's children and his sister's, Rachel had generously contributed to the number. Paul rode post, and was commissioned to print money for the new Congress. Gunpowder was needed, and Paul learned the secret of its manufacture. It was a war to the hilt now. The rebels must win their fight, or lose their lives.

Through the battle of Bunker Hill—cannon fire dinning in his ears—Paul worked steadily.

Events marched on. A new name was upon all lips. Young General George Washington was leading his ragged forces to vic-

tory after victory. The bright day dawned when Boston fell. The British had departed. From all sides, in carts and afoot, amid laughter and tears, the exiles streamed back into their city. Families were reunited, and once more the numerous Reverses occupied the house in North Square.

But not yet was Paul to settle down. General Washington ordered him to take command of Castle Island. Across this narrow strip of water separating the island from the town, Lieutenant Colonel Revere gazed wistfully at the mainland. He longed for his family, and for the feel of satin smooth silver in his hands. Paul could learn a new craft "as quick as you could turn about," and he made an excellent soldier. He had learned to cast cannon, of which the new Republic was in great need. But his heart was in Boston. Now and then he slipped over at night, to fire his forge and to fashion a pepper pot or a porringer—rejoicing that his hands had retained their skill.

The Fourth of July. Anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Boston was gay in triumphant celebration. Cannon and fireworks saluted the dawn of a new life. From Castle Island Paul fired cannon and musket, hailing the first birthday of the robust infant, Liberty.

And then—the fortunes of war took an unexpected turn for Paul Revere. After an unsuccessful foray against the British at Penobscot, Paul's commission was withdrawn. He was ordered to "repair to his dwelling," charged with having deserted his men in battle. For two years he petitioned for a court-martial, that he might clear his name. Yet the charges against him did not weigh too heavily on his mind, for they were unfounded. Primarily an artisan, he was happy in his work.

Foreseeing a demand for luxuries with the coming of peace, he placed in England large orders for goods that had long been absent from the Boston shops. "The old order changeth," and Paul keeps pace with the new. With the signing of peace, his goods arrived and he set up shop as a sideline, never forsaking his forge for his new pursuits.

## PAUL REVERE

George Washington died, and the nation mourned as he was given a hero's burial. The Masons requested from his widow a lock of Washington's hair, that they might preserve it in memory of their beloved leader. Paul fashioned an urn of gold, within which—beneath a glass cover—they placed the cherished relic.

A new social life was arising in Boston. The China trade was in full flourish, bringing prosperity and foreign culture. Old fortunes were disappearing, new faces dominated the scene. These nouveaux riches had a tendency to bury their homespun past under a veneer of genteel elegance. Old comrades waxed bitter at this outcome of their heroic struggle. But Paul's bright eye surveyed the scene, and found it all to the good. He perceived many new fields awaiting the exploration of his practical mind.

## VI

STILL THERE was unrest, and Paul had much to do. The states were quarreling amongst themselves. The Federal Constitution had not yet been ratified by Massachusetts. Sam Adams found it inadequate, and withheld his signature. He saw therein the seeds of future strife, and advised changes and additions. Once more the Green Dragon received its secret guests. After a lengthy council the leaders emerged, Paul among them, and paraded to Adams's house. They demanded immediate ratification. Bowing to the will of the people, Adams signed.

Paul was engrossed in a new project. In his shop he sold hardware, and envisioned the time when this would all be made at home, not imported. Day and night he was busy in a shed he had rented. One bright morning he emerged to face an indignant housewife, her arms akimbo. "Pray, what is the meaning of this, Mr. Revere?" she demanded. "Filthy soot all over my clean linen every time the wind is about."

Paul pointed jubilantly to the belching smokestack. "We've got our furnace agoing!" he shouted.

Frowning, the woman surveyed the soot-smear'd wash. She

covered her ears against the clanging sounds, and her nose against the smells that issued from the shed. But to Paul these sounds and smells were perfumed music. He moved his home, to be closer to them. Modern industry had come to Boston.

In the midst of all this activity, Paul was granted his court-martial, and was exonerated of the charge of desertion.

Faster now. Everyone was in a rush. The Industrial Age was ushering in new modes and greater needs. Paul cast his first bell. It was "panny, harsh and shrill." But Boston and Revere were inordinately proud of it. It made an excellent fire alarm. Enchanted by his new work, Paul was determined to perfect his art until his bells would outmatch the sweetness of the English bells.

The Reveres were right prosperous now. Paul had established a copper foundry in Canton. There they spent their summers, returning to Boston for the winter. Rachel had time for "lolling" a bit, and attired herself in the latest Paris mode. Paul had been elected Grand Master of the Masons, and attended banquets and parades. On the nights when he was at home, there were backgammon and whist to while away the hours. Rachel's tongue was as quick as ever, her tart observations still bringing a twinkle to Paul's eye. Only five children and three grandchildren remained with the old folks. The others had scattered inland, where industrialization was opening up the country.

Paul clung to the knee breeches and the cocked hat of his youth, even though the fashion in men's clothing had changed. In all things else he was in the vanguard. The ban on card playing, dancing and the theater had been lifted, thanks to a committee of which he was the heart and the head. Valiantly he campaigned for prison reform, for the better treatment of the insane, for every cause that seemed to him liberal and just. Nor were personal problems too much for him. Deborah Gannett, the only woman to fight in the Revolution, had fallen into a pitiable state of poverty. Paul petitioned Congress, and won a pension for her. The apprentice system was still in effect. Paul told his fellow artisans that higher wages and shorter hours would make better



## PAUL REVERE

workmen—and he set the example in his own factories. “A strange creature, Paul Revere. He really practices what he preaches.”

### VII

PAUL HAD more time now for cultural pursuits. His many ventures were well organized. Paul Revere III carried on the tradition in the silversmith shop. Joseph Warren Revere supervised the copper foundry. This gave their father leisure to write poetry. Though mediocre, Paul's verses were full of good will, reflecting deep contentment with his lot.

His correspondence had become voluminous. Interested in genealogy, he exchanged letters with his relatives in Europe. To one relative, John Rivoire, he lamented that there would be no more young Reveres. A mere sixteen children, when a man could well have done with a good even twenty.

Civic affairs still claimed him. With other workers, he organized a League of Artisans. Their first object was to institute reforms beneficial both to apprentices and to employers. And thus the merit system was inaugurated.

Life was shaping itself at last into a pattern of quiet and contented usefulness. But, after a short illness, Rachel died—and Paul was left to “trudge on alone.”

He had almost reached his eightieth birthday now. But with his round, ruddy face topped by a mane of thick white hair, he looked scarcely more than sixty. The hale man was a familiar sight to Bostonians. He was to be seen everywhere, his knee breeches and ruffles conspicuous amid the fashionable long trousers. “As regularly as comes Sabbath” he attended church.

Ever ready with a jest, eye twinkling in merriment, this patriarch playboy was a great favorite with the neighborhood children. Especially on those days when a new bell was being tested before the purchasing committee. When some fascinated youth drew too close, Paul would prod him gently with his cane. “Stand

back, lad," he would warn. "If that hammer hits your head, you will make more noise than the bell."

Gone were all his old comrades—those valiant men whose sacrifices had built a nation. And perhaps it was for the best. Many would have lamented the turn of events. For the great leveling process had begun. Beacon Hill, that gallant landmark, was disappearing bit by bit. All day long the carts trundled up and down, dumping their loads of earth into the Charles River. With hands folded behind his back, legs astraddle, Paul watched—interested only in the engineering feat.

At night he sat in the spacious parlor, glancing now and then at Rachel's empty "lolling chair." At times his gaze rested on the small gold urn, containing the lock of George Washington's hair. And a sigh or two would escape him.

## VIII

"EIGHT O'CLOCK of a fine clear morning, and all's well!" Bostonians in their Sunday best are churchward bound. From every quarter of the city, bells summon the worshipers—Revere bells, most of them. But hold now!—A new voice joins the chorus—the "Passing Bell." It is Paul's masterpiece, and hangs in King's Chapel. Many civic-minded citizens have added their family silver to the casting, to give it that fine mellow tone.

Churchgoers pause to listen, counting the strokes. A male! Eighty-three years! Paul Revere has made another silent crossing—this time over the Dark River—and is departed on his last great ride.

**ROBERT FULTON**

*Important Dates in the Life of Robert Fulton*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1765—Born, Pennsylvania.                 | 1797—Built submarine in Paris.                |
| 1778—Invented paddle-wheels.             | 1801—Experimented with submarines at Brest.   |
| 1782-85—Painted miniature portraits.     | 1803—Launched a steamboat on the Seine.       |
| 1786—Went to London.                     | 1806—Returned to the United States.           |
| 1793—Interested in canal navigation.     | 1807—Sailed steamboat Clermont on the Hudson. |
| 1794—Patented mill for polishing marble. | 1809—Took out patent on steam navigation.     |
| 1796—Interested in bridge building.      | 1815—Died, New York.                          |

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# Robert Fulton

1765–1815

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ONE NIGHT in 1806, Robert Fulton was lecturing to a large audience in New York. He had just returned from Europe, where he had astounded the scientific world with his experiments on steamships, torpedoes and submarines. The public was especially interested in that “most diabolical” of his inventions—an “under-water contraption of cylinders and explosives” which, regulated by clockwork, could be placed under an enemy ship and blow it up. He was explaining to his audience the mechanism of this invention. “The torpedo which you see before you is charged with a hundred and seventy pounds of powder. Attached to it, as you will note, is a bit of clockwork which regulates the timing of the explosion. Now let me remove the peg which plugs up the powder charge.” An apprehensive stir in the auditorium. “Next,” he continued, paying no attention to the uneasiness of his audience, “let me set the clock . . . There . . . And now, ladies and gentlemen, if I let this clock run ten minutes longer, we shall all be blown into kingdom come . . .” He tried to go on with his lecture, but there was no one left to listen to him. At the words “blown into kingdom come,” the entire audience in a panic had

made for the nearest exits. "Robert Fulton and the Devil are in league to destroy the world!"

## II

HIS FATHER was Scotch, and his mother was Irish—a background which gave Robert the combined advantage of a tenacious will and a vivid imagination. He had need of both these characteristics from the start, for at the age of three he was left fatherless—a tough proposition for a youngster whose widowed mother had five children to feed and no income to fall back upon. Poor food, a frail body and an everlasting itch to be doing something with his fingers. He didn't care for the three R's, which his mother taught him, nor for his lessons in school—which he entered at the age of eight. "This child," said his teacher, "will not even have an ordinary education." No, his education was most extraordinary—and through his own choosing. He never knew how to spell correctly; but he knew how to make a lead pencil superior to the one that his teacher gave him. "Why don't you study your books?" his teacher asked him.

"I dunno, sir. Guess there are so many thoughts in my head, I can't crowd no thoughts into it out of my books."

"Can't crowd *any* thoughts into it! And no more of your impertinence, young man!"

"Yes, sir. Can't crowd *any* thoughts into it. And I won't be impertinent no more."

Incorrigible child. Just *wouldn't* learn his grammar. But he learned how to make all sorts of little gadgets in the blacksmith shops and the tinsmith shops of Lancaster (Pennsylvania). And he drew original designs for ornamenting the rifles that were manufactured in the village arsenal. "A pretty good draughtsman and a very good mechanic."

And a youngster with an inventive mind. One Fourth of July he decided to have a new kind of celebration all by himself. Bringing to the general store a number of candles which he had

saved up for the occasion, he exchanged them for a bag of gunpowder and several sheets of pasteboard. "Please don't roll up these sheets, Mr. Howard," he said to the storekeeper.

"All right if you say so," replied the storekeeper. "But tell me what you're going to do with them."

"Wait till tonight, and you'll see."

That night the villagers were startled to see Robert's "new-fangled shooting candles" flashing through the air. The thirteen-year-old inventor had become the celebrity of the town.

Always inventing things. Always drawing pictures. And oftentimes getting into trouble because of his too fertile imagination. On one occasion he precipitated a fight between the townspeople and the Hessian soldiers who were quartered in the neighborhood. The town authorities, in order to avoid trouble between the civilians and the soldiers, had stretched a rope at a designated place with instructions that neither the townspeople nor the Hessians were to cross that rope. Whereupon Robert drew a picture of the townspeople invading the Hessian side of the rope and putting the enemy to the sword. This provocative picture, displayed in the public square, served as an instigation to both sides. A serious riot broke out, and it was only with difficulty that the cooler heads among the two factions were able to prevent bloodshed.

Stirring times, and stirring thoughts. Robert couldn't make up his mind as to his future career. Should he devote himself to mechanics, or to painting? Or, perhaps, to fighting? General Washington needed plenty of fighting men. But Robert was neither strong enough, nor old enough, for the rigors of a military life. "You are meant for the peaceful pursuits, my boy," said his mother. She sent him to Philadelphia, where for three years he knocked about as a jeweler's apprentice, an architect's assistant, and an occasional painter of miniature portraits.

One of the men whose portraits he painted was Benjamin Franklin. The elderly statesman encouraged him in his work and

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS AMERICANS

secured him commissions from several personages of "manners and means." Robert was on the way to making for himself a tidy sum when his career was cut short for the time being. An inflammation of the lungs, accompanied by the spitting of blood, sent him to the warm springs of Virginia.

Recovery, and a return trip to Philadelphia. He had planned, during his convalescence, to try his fortune in England. He wanted to ask Franklin's advice about this plan. "You are right, young man. England is the place for an artist. America is too young, too eager to achieve. We have no time here for the leisurely appreciation of art."

He gave Fulton a letter of introduction to Benjamin West, the American painter who had made his mark in England. Fulton thanked his benefactor, invested the greater part of his savings in a farm for his mother, and set sail for England with a capital of forty guineas (about \$200) in his purse. "How foolish of him," said a friend, "to have decided upon the two most unprofitable careers in the world."

"Yes," nodded another. "Painting and inventing—a wild goose chase with an empty gun in either hand."

### III

LONDON, and a devoted intimacy with Benjamin West. Under the elder artist's inspiration, Fulton made rapid progress as a portrait painter. On two occasions his pictures were exhibited at the Royal Academy. His American friends had been wrong in their predictions. His artistic career was bringing him not only profit but prestige. "His portraits," wrote an eminent critic (Charles Henry Hart), "are well drawn, good in design, delicately colored, and well executed technically."

Yet Fulton was not content. If he stuck to his art, he would remain a competent painter all his life. But that was not enough. What he wanted was not competency, but mastery. And so he gave up the promise of his artistic career for the uncertainty of his



engineering adventures. "Now at last," said everybody, "young Fulton has gone definitely mad."

Definitely and stubbornly mad to turn his creative ability into constructive good. Fulton possessed that rare combination of genius—Leonardo da Vinci was another man who possessed it—he was at once scientific in his art and artistic in his science. He reduced every object to a specific design and developed every design into a provocative picture. It was therefore an easy transition for him to transform his canvases into blueprints—to advance from the copying of existing shapes to the shaping of new existences. In rapid succession he invented a machine for spinning flax, an appliance for twisting ropes, and a mill for polishing marble. First the thought, then the plan, and finally the finished product. "He never made a model of an invention until he had completed a drawing which showed every part projected on the proper scale."

All these inventions, however, were but a preparation for his life's work—the lessening of the distance, both mental and material, between man and man. It was his ambition from now on to facilitate travel, to stimulate commerce and to discourage dissension and war. For his interests were not only artistic and scientific; they were also political. "The establishment of Republics throughout Europe . . . and the study of the Art of Peace should be the aim of everybody." Certainly it was the aim of his own inventive labors. He tried to develop a system of canals in England and on the European continent, so that the Old World might be more closely united into a confederation of free and friendly states. He spent a number of years on the invention of the submarine and the torpedo—two weapons whose destructiveness, he hoped, would bring about "the end of naval oppression and the establishment of peace through an agreement of nations." And he worked incessantly on his new "eagle of the sea"—a steam-propelled ship whose speed would "narrow the sea into a strait and turn America and Europe into next-door neighbors."

The dreams of a deranged mind, was the almost universal ver-

dict when he spoke of his plans. One day he was invited to dinner at a friend's house. Next to him at the table sat Prince Talleyrand. The two men conversed about Fulton's inventions, especially the steamboat. After the dinner, the host asked Talleyrand for his opinion of Robert Fulton. "A charming man and brilliant conversationalist. But"—and Talleyrand shook his head sadly—"I'm afraid the poor fellow's cracked."

This fear that Fulton was cracked compelled many an influential person to fight shy of him. Owing to the high cost of his materials, he was always in need of funds. And almost always he was refused when he requested a loan. "My money," said one of the wags who denied his request, "would only float away on the sea or go up in flames." Once, when he was working on the steamboat, he was in absolute need of a thousand dollars. He went to a wealthy friend and asked him to advance this sum as an investment. "You don't expect me to throw away a thousand dollars," said his friend. "But I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you a hundred dollars if you can get me the names of nine other people who will advance a hundred dollars each." With great difficulty Fulton succeeded in raising the nine hundred dollars. But he couldn't get the money from the friend who had offered the original hundred. For he couldn't give him the names of the other nine contributors. Every one of them had refused to subscribe publicly to "so crazy an adventure."

## IV

IN THE COURSE of his travels to interest people in his inventions, Fulton had an interesting episode with a French noblewoman—the wife of the Vicomte de Gontaut. It was during the crossing of the English Channel that he met her. We have the story in her own words: "Our family having been proscribed at the time of the (French) Revolution, I was returning to Paris in connection with the management of our property. In order to avoid detection, I had assumed the name of Madame François, 'a dealer in

laces going to Paris on business.' One day, as I was sitting on the deck, an Englishman of striking appearance and charming demeanor came and spoke to me in halting French. He was delighted when he learned that I could speak English. 'Madame,' he said to me, 'you could do me a great favor if you would act as my interpreter.' I promised him I would. He then told me that he was an inventor of amazing machines—boats that could sail under the water and blow up ships on the surface, vessels driven by steam power that could outspeed any sail-driven craft, and several other devices that sounded like tales out of the Arabian Nights. I listened to his talk with genuine interest, and I agreed to introduce him to various important Parisians who might help him to further his plans."

On her arrival in Paris, however, she was arrested as a noblewoman in disguise. Fulton visited her in the detention room. He had in his possession, he told her, a letter recommending him to Monsieur Barthélemy, one of the Directors of the French Republic. "With this letter, Madame, I can set you free—provided you will do me the honor to become my wife."

"But, Monsieur, I am still married to my husband."

"What a pity, Madame François, what a pity! I would make you rich. My inventions are going to set the world agog. Just say the word. Divorce Monsieur François and come to me. I will marry you, and that will be the end of your troubles."

But "Madame François" shook her head. "I didn't dare at the time to tell him that I was traveling under a fictitious name, and that in reality I was the wife of a French nobleman."

A few weeks later, she managed to secure her release through the influence of one of her friends—Herr Schemelpeninck—the German consul to Paris. She had now, for safety's sake, assumed her maiden name. One day as she was walking in the street with her brother-in-law, her "English inventor" rushed up and seized both her hands. "Ah, Madame François, I am so happy to see you!"

"Pardon, Monsieur," said her brother-in-law, "but zis is not

Madame François. You have ze honor to address Mademoiselle de Montault."

Fulton shrugged his shoulders and walked away. He couldn't make out the mystery. Was it the same woman, or a twin sister?

Several months elapsed. Fulton had returned to London. One night at the opera he saw his "mysterious lady" sitting in the box of a friend of his. He made his way to her side. "What an unexpected pleasure to meet you here, Mademoiselle de Montault!"

"Monsieur is mistaken," said her escort. "The lady you are addressing is the Vicomtesse de Gontaut."

"What, triplets?" muttered Fulton under his breath. Aloud, however, he said with a smile: "Madame, allow me to congratulate your husband on being married to the three most beautiful women in France."

## V

IT WAS through Madame de Gontaut that Fulton was able to interest the French ministers in his submarine and steamboat experiments. In December, 1797, he made his first attempt—on the Seine—to blow up a ship with a submarine. The attempt was a failure, both Fulton and his assistant escaping narrowly with their lives. Undeterred by the setback, he went ahead and built another submarine. This "undersea battleship" aroused the interest of Napoleon, who was at the time (1801) planning an invasion of England. "The sea which separates you from your enemy," Fulton wrote to Napoleon, "gives him an immense advantage over you. Aided . . . by the winds and the tempests, he defies you from his inaccessible island. I have it in my power to cause this obstacle which protects him to disappear. In spite of all his fleets, and in any weather, I can transport your armies to his territory (and destroy his ships) in a few hours . . . I am prepared to submit my plans."

Napoleon invited him to submit the plans, and to demonstrate their effectiveness. In the summer of 1801, Fulton succeeded in

"blowing a boat into atoms." The submarine was a proved success. Fulton was elated. "At long last we have an instrument that will do away with the erroneous system of exclusive commerce and distant possessions . . . the obstacles which hinder nations from arriving at a lasting peace."

But Napoleon and his ministers were not so sanguine about the usefulness of the submarine. "It would be impossible," said the Minister of Marine, "to give commissions to men using such an instrument in war, as these men would surely be hanged if captured." Fulton's invention was turned down.

Disappointed with his failure to interest the world in the submarine, Fulton now turned his entire effort to his next idea—the steamship. In this idea—the possibility of steam navigation—he was not alone. Both in America and in Europe there were a number of scientists preoccupied with experiments in this field. One of these scientists, Robert R. Livingston, was in 1801 appointed Minister to France. The two Roberts—Fulton and Livingston—were drawn together through their similarity in temperament and taste. Fulton had the ideas, and Livingston had the funds. They formed a partnership which turned out to their mutual advantage and to the benefit of the entire world.

At the outset, however, they had anything but smooth sailing. In the early spring of 1803 they were ready with their model steamboat. It was anchored on the Seine, waiting for its initial experiment. One morning Fulton was roused from his bed. His boat, he was told, had sunk in the night. He rushed to the spot. Sure enough, the boat was split in two. The iron machinery in the center had proved too heavy for the wooden structure.

Plunging into the icy water and working incessantly for twenty-four hours, Fulton succeeded in raising the boat. The machinery was intact, but the framework was a wreck. So too, for a time, was his health. But Fulton went right on rebuilding the boat, and in the summer of that same year was ready for the test.

On August 10, 1803, the following account of the historic event appeared in the *Journal des Débats*:

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS AMERICANS

" . . . During the past two or three months there has been seen at the end of the quay Chaillot (on the Seine) a boat of curious appearance, equipped with two large wheels, mounted on an axle like a chariot, while behind these wheels was a kind of large stove with a pipe, as if there was some kind of a small fire engine intended to operate the wheels of the boat . . .

"The day before yesterday, at six in the evening, the inventor . . . put his boat in motion . . . and for an hour and a half he produced the curious spectacle of a boat moved by wheels, like a chariot, these wheels being provided with paddles or flat plates, and being moved by a fire engine . . .

"The boat ascended and descended the stream four times from Les Bons-Hommes as far as the pump of Chaillot; it was maneuvered with facility, turning to the right and left, came to anchor, started again, and passed by the swimming school . . .

"This mechanism, applied to our rivers—the Seine, the Loire, and the Rhone—will have most advantageous consequences upon our internal navigation. The tows and barges which now require four months to come from Nantes to Paris, would arrive promptly in ten to fifteen days . . ."

Again Fulton had offered a valuable gift to the French government, and again the offer was turned down. Napoleon and his ministers gave due consideration to the "experiment on the Seine," and decided that the steamship, like the submarine, was a "useless toy."

Fulton was now thoroughly disgusted with France—not only for personal but also for political reasons. When he had first visited that country, the reign of terror had given way to the promise of freedom. His democratic spirit had thrilled to the hope of a new day for Europe when despotism would be a thing of the past. It was a great shock to him, therefore, to see the accession of Napoleon to the office of First Consul. "The French Revolution is dead. The French people have merely exchanged one despot for another." Fulton longed to breathe once more the air of a free country. He took passage to America.

And to final glory. Together with Livingston, who had re-

## ROBERT FULTON

turned from his diplomatic post in the Old World, he built a steamship—the *Clermont*—in the East River, and one day quietly sailed around the tip of New York and over to the New Jersey shore. It was a most successful trip. Fulton and Livingston were now ready for their first public test.

The public, however, had nothing but jeers for "Fulton's Folly"—the nickname given to the boat by one of the New York wit-snappers. "The thing," wrote a journalist who had gone down to examine the boat, "is an ungainly craft looking precisely like a backwoods' sawmill mounted on a scow and set on fire."

Yet on the day of the trial—August 17, 1807—a large number of spectators gathered on the banks of the Hudson River. "While we were putting off from the wharf," wrote Fulton in a letter to a friend, "I heard a number of sarcastic remarks." Excitement, incredulity, ridicule, scorn—and then silence, followed by a shout of spontaneous applause. "Holy Jupiter, the thing does work!" yelled one of the spectators hysterically as the *Clermont* wheeled across the river, made a clean-cut turn upstream, overtook sloop after sloop and "parted with them as if they had been at anchor."

Three weeks after the trial—from the 7th to the 11th of September—the *Clermont* sailed up the Hudson to Albany and back. The trip was a continuous triumph. Throngs of people on the banks and in boats looked on "with awe almost amounting to terror," as the water-chariot rolled over the Hudson, her funnel spouting forth a pillar of cloud by day, a pillar of fire by night. A scene reminiscent of the Old Testament—the finger of God pointing the way to a new Canaan, the Promised Land of speedier communication and better understanding between man and man. "The power of propelling boats by steam," as Fulton wrote to one of his sponsors, "is now fully proved."

## VI

THE REST of Fulton's life may be summed up in a few words. A late marriage and an early death. He was forty-two when he

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS AMERICANS

married—there were four children resulting from the union—and only forty-nine when he died. As a mark of respect, the only one of its kind ever shown to a private citizen, the New York legislature passed a resolution that both houses should wear mourning for six weeks.



**JOHN JACOB ASTOR**

*Important Dates in the Life of John Jacob Astor*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1763—Born, Waldorf, Germany.                   | 1809—Started American Fur Company.                           |
| 1784—Came to America.                          | 1811—Founded Astoria at mouth of Columbia River.             |
| 1788—Went with cargo of furs to London.        | Engaged in shipbuilding, fur and tea trade, and real estate. |
| 1794—Started shipping furs all over the world. | 1848—Worth \$30,000,000.                                     |
| 1798—Worth quarter of a million.               | Died, New York.  |
| 1802—Worth half a million.                     |  |

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# John Jacob Astor

1763–1848

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**B**Y A ROADSIDE a boy of sixteen sat and gazed at the village he had just left. Tears blurred his vision; the tiled roofs of Wald-dorf, and the old Roman road that led down to it, danced in the sunlight. Behind it rose Germany's famed Black Forest, whence Wald-Dorf (Forest Village) had taken its name. Out of sight of friends and family, the boy could let the tears fall unrestrained. But America beckoned, and John Jacob Astor was not the kind to turn back once he had set his mind on some objective. His brother in America had written him time and again about the place where a man could be whatever he liked, if only he worked hard. There was no end to the amount of money a man could make, and Jacob wanted passionately to make money. He was determined not to be a butcher like his father.

Fair haired and thickset, Jacob had the slow deliberation of the European peasant. His blue eyes were merry with the promise of good humor; but the mouth and the chin bespoke an obstinacy that would carry him to whatever end he had set for himself. First he would go to England. Jacob was thorough—a few years with the firm of his brother in London would give him mastery over the English language. It would also give him the fare to the

New World. In his pocket reposed the sum of his worldly wealth—two dollars. Tied in a handkerchief, and carried across his shoulders on a stick, was his wardrobe. In his head he carried visions of success, a stubborn self-confidence and a capacity for hard work.

A cart lumbered up the road. Jacob hailed the driver. His friendliness and youth earned him a lift, and he was taken one step nearer to the Rhine. From there he would work his way to Britain. And then to America. As he sat quietly beside the driver, wrapped in his dreams, no one could have guessed that he would some day be the richest man in America.

Jacob was the last of four sons to leave the paternal roof. Rebellious against a drunken autocratic father, each of the Astor boys had struck out for himself at the earliest possible moment. And every one of them was successful in his chosen field. In London, brother George Peter dealt in musical instruments. With open arms he welcomed young Jacob into his employ. Jacob learned the business quickly. A music lover and flute player in his own right, he was a decided help in the business. For four years he worked for his brother. And then, having saved sufficient funds, he prepared for the next lap of his journey toward wealth. George Peter urged his young brother to stay, offering him a partnership in the firm. But Jacob's dreams were too big for a mere partnership. Dressed in a suit of English make, he invested a third of his savings in seven flutes, and set sail—in the steerage—for the land of opportunity.

Aboard the vessel were a number of fur traders. In fascination Jacob listened to their stories of the wild lands teeming with furbearing wild life. He listened, and learned. His practical eye pierced beyond the adventure that would have contented most boys. His alert mind stored away facts and figures. He had no vision for the beauty of the rainbow. He saw only the pot of gold that lay beckoning at the further end.

On an early spring morning (1784) Jacob strode up Broadway, New York. Cool underneath the rustling poplar trees, mu-

## JOHN JACOB ASTOR

sical with the cries of venders, colorful with brightly clad Negroes, Broadway was a place of fascination. Jacob felt immediately at home in the bustling, busy town. He clutched the flutes tightly against his side. In his pocket there remained only fifty cents, but in his heart there was a capital of high hope. He smiled as he envisioned the future. Some day all these hurrying strangers would harken to the name of John Jacob Astor.

### II

BROTHER HEINRICH was doing very well as a butcher; he offered "Yawcob" a place in his shop. But butchering was not included in Jacob's plans. His first job was as a baker's boy. Carrying baskets of buns and bread through the streets, he vociferously peddled his wares. Though he hated the work, he applied himself to it diligently. But not for long. In two weeks he had found employment with a fur merchant, a Quaker named Brown. At the same time, romance had found Jacob. It was at the lodging house of the Widow Todd, a lady of good birth but straitened circumstances. She had a daughter, Sarah, who helped her with her chores. Sarah was the type of young lady that Jacob could understand and appreciate. A hard worker, with a sweet disposition and a practical mind. Before long the two young people were strolling arm in arm along the Bowery—an ideal setting for lovers, with the tulip trees nodding overhead and pedestrians nodding a friendly "good-day" from the sidewalks. Jacob was getting on in Quaker Brown's fur business. All he had learned on shipboard he now remembered and put to good use. To this knowledge he added the observations of a quick eye. So well did he acquit himself that Quaker Brown sent him on buying trips into the Iroquois country. With German thoroughness Jacob learned the many dialects of the tribes he dealt with, and thus made himself a welcome guest in the Indian villages. Unlike the buyers who had gone before him, he treated the red men as friends and equals. He had learned, too, that "music hath charms

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to soothe the savage breast." Many a time his flute gained him the confidence of some stony-faced chief who would not traffic with other white men. His efforts brought pleasing results. He returned with loads of fur, far more valuable than those which the average trader was able to obtain. Quaker Brown, delighted with Jacob's industry, widened the range of his activities and raised his salary. It seemed that Jacob was once more to receive the offer of a partnership.

In the meantime, Jacob and Sarah were married. They took rooms on the first floor of the Widow Todd's house. But Sarah was not the one to sit back and to let a struggling young husband support her. She kept on working for her mother. Smiles followed them everywhere, and approval from the older folks. "Here is a likely couple, bound to succeed." Ambition burned in both their breasts with an equal flame. Jacob was outgrowing Quaker Brown's establishment. He was planning for the day when he would have his own business. Sarah was all encouragement. Why wait longer? There were the three hundred dollars of her dowry money, the two hundred dollars that Jacob had saved, and the rooms on the first floor of the lodging house for a shop. A small enough grubstake, to be sure, from which to build a fortune. But everything is possible when two young people are healthy, ambitious, and very much in love.

The seven flutes had long reposed in the window of a store where Jacob had placed them to be sold on commission. Though there had been neither sale nor inquiry, he had not lost his faith in them. Now, with other musical instruments from England, he placed them on sale along with a handful of furs. The papers began to carry an announcement that Mr. J. J. Astor had opened his doors to the public. Sarah proved herself the perfect helpmeet—never idle, always ready with a smile and a mouthful of good sound advice.

As children began to make their appearance at regular intervals, Sarah took their coming in her stride and somehow found room for them. There was no time for coddling, as she had to

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tend the shop—sometimes for six months at a stretch—when he was away in the fur country. Sarah had an eye for furs. "It is better than my own," Jacob cheerfully admitted—and he never concluded a deal without the benefit of her practical judgment.

The harder the Astors worked, the more genial they became. Jacob's homecomings were scenes of great rejoicing. Toward his wife and his children he was full of tender playfulness. His affectionate gestures, though somewhat heavy, were none the less deeply appreciated. A family of loving bears.

One sorrow had entered their otherwise perfect domestic happiness. Their first son, whom they had named after John Jacob, had been born an idiot; he must be confined to an upper room. Upon Astor's arrival, his first thought was always for the unfortunate child. "How iss de boy?" he would ask in the guttural accent which he had never lost. "Just the same, Jacob," Sarah would reply, wiping away a tear with her apron.

Jacob adhered to the principles which he had early formulated for himself. "To be honest, to be industrious, and never to gamble." But things were getting away from him. The business had expanded so rapidly that Jacob asked for a loan from Heinrich to keep up with his obligations. Two hundred dollars was all he wanted; but Heinrich was outraged, delivering a long lecture on gambling and refusing the loan. Jacob listened to the tirade. With head bowed, he saw all that he had worked for slipping away for want of a few dollars. At last Heinrich compromised. "I will not lend you the two hundred," he said, "but I will give you one hundred, on condition that you promise never to borrow again." Jacob took the one hundred, choking down his humiliation, and went to Sarah. Sarah was optimistic. They would find the other hundred somehow, she said. And somehow they did. But the bitterness of the incident had burned itself into Jacob's breast. He never again permitted himself to be placed in a position where he would be forced to borrow.

At the beginning of his career the accent had been on musical instruments. But as the fur business advanced, the music business receded into the background, and eventually was discarded alto-

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gether. And then came real estate. Jacob's first venture into this field was modest enough—two lots in lower Manhattan, bought for little more than a song. At about the same time George Washington was elected first President of the United States. An auspicious year—the birth of a vast American fortune, the beginning of a great American institution.

### III

AS HE FRATERNIZED with the trappers, Jacob listened to their tales of richer fur lands beyond those yet penetrated. Fired by their stories of the fabulous fur trade in Canada, he went to Montreal. He established contact directly with the Canadian trappers, setting up his own trading posts in the great Northwest. The Astor empire was spreading, the stacks of furs in New York grew higher, and his competitors dropped one after another by the wayside. No longer was the first floor of his mother-in-law's home large enough to house the project. He rented another warehouse, and then another, and still another.

One large stock of furs lay in the attic of his new home. Jacob hated to see merchandise lying around without earning money. He knew there was a large demand for that particular fur in England. But his thrift had hardened into parsimoniousness, and he refused to hire a London agent to transact the deal. Restlessly he paced the floor, telling Sarah about his problem. She looked at him, thinking. Jacob had been showing signs of discontent. With the first approach of spring he had grown restless, and the restlessness had lasted through the summer. Staid and respected citizen that he was, he had often absented himself from his place of business. Perhaps a European voyage would do him good, she thought; and she suggested that he make the trip by himself. Jacob acted eagerly upon the suggestion. He bought a ticket for England—in the steerage, though he was already one of the richest men in America. Generous to his children, and indeed to all his relatives, he was a miser to his own needs.





*Robert Fulton*



*John Jacob Astor*

## JOHN JACOB ASTOR

In London, Jacob heard mention of the governor of the East India Company—that vast enterprise which dominated the sea trade between Europe and Asia. The name of the governor sounded familiar. It was that of a German immigrant whom Jacob had known in his own poor years. Jacob visited the all-powerful governor. Sure enough, it was the same man. Invited to dine, Jacob refused. He did not own evening clothes, and would not spend money on any such frivolous fripperies. The governor, wishing to present Jacob with some memento of their former struggles, gave him a permit to trade in Canton. The document meant nothing to its recipient. He tucked it into a pocket, and for a time forgot its existence. On his return to New York, he showed it casually to Sarah. At once she recognized its value. “We will trade in Canton,” she said.

“But ships,” Jacob protests. “Where will we get ships?”

Didn’t James Livermore have ships? she asked. And weren’t they resting idle at the wharves, because of the trouble with the French?

As usual, Sarah’s advice was sound, and Jacob effected one of his typical deals. James Livermore would furnish the ships and the cargo. Jacob would furnish the permit, and both of them would share the profits equally.

At first James Livermore refused the obviously unfair bargain. But anything was better than having his ships idle, and so finally he agreed. A few days after the arrival of the first ship from Canton to New York, a dray deposited on the Astor doorstep a number of small, heavy kegs. “What are these?” Sarah asked, astonished. “The fruits of the East India passage,” Jacob answered. “Fifty thousand dollars.” Sarah could only gasp.

Jacob’s appetite had been whetted; he now proceeded to satisfy it. He chartered ships, he bought ships, he built ships, until at last he dominated the Canton trade. While his competitors wondered, Jacob chuckled over a secret that made his transactions so much more profitable than theirs. For he not only shipped furs to Canton, bringing back the precious cargo of tea, but he docked

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many of his ships at the Sandwich Islands, loading them with the sandalwood so prized by the Cantonese.

The Astors now were solid citizens, received in the best of society. Jacob's children attended the most exclusive colleges and finishing schools. As Jacob's wealth increased, so did his thirst for respectability and his childish vanity. A director of the Bank of the United States, he didn't like to be reminded of his beginnings. When a sister arrived from Germany and her husband went into the distilling business, Jacob was outraged. This business was not respectable, he stormed. It was an insult to his position. His sister only shrugged her shoulders. "Jacob is not such a much of a much himself," she scoffed. "Didn't he start as a baker's boy, yelling in the streets for a few pennies?" And Jacob could only wince, and pocket his pride along with his wealth.

And his wife Sarah, though she didn't share his pride, was always eager to share his wealth. She loved nothing better than to receive presents of large sums; but, being practical and trade-minded, they both enjoyed a little domestic bargaining. "You look ofer dot new lot of skins, yah, Sarah?" Jacob would urge.

"I'm a busy woman, Jacob; my time is worth money."

"Von tousand dollars an hour. Two." Sarah would shake her head solemnly. "Eight, ten, Sarah." Then, smiling, Sarah would inspect the pelts, pocketing the sum with extra relish, because she had earned the money.

As Jacob's empire spread, on land through the Northwest into Canada, and by sea to the Indies and Canton, his life grew more simple. With leisure to do as he liked, he roamed the countryside. Saddling his horse every clear day, he would ride beyond the city, up through Greenwich Village and further, to the very hills of Harlem. Yet even in this simple exercise he had an eye to business. He foresaw the day when the town would spread. While his friends scoffed at the money Jacob was spending on useless tracts out in the country, he was buying land, and yet more land, laying down the firm basis for the fortune that the later generations of Astors were to enjoy. On Wall Street he sold two lots, and with

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the proceeds he bought hundreds of acres of wasteland. The purchaser of the Wall Street lots enjoyed the bargain; it was a red letter day when somebody could put something over on Jacob. Jacob chuckled. "Your lots vill not increase much in falue," he said. "But in twenty years mine acres vill be vort a hundert times vat I paid for dem." He was right.

Jacob cherished the idea that he never cheated. Yet he was capable of welching on a small promise. A captain of one of his ships, while trading in Canton, was able to save Jacob much money at the cost of his own time and some expense. Jacob was delighted. There was some fine Madeira ripening in his cellar, he said. When it was good, the captain should have some. Many times the captain called on Jacob. "Is the Madeira ready?" he would inquire. "No, nod ready yet," Jacob would reply. He could not bring himself to part with so precious a thing as a bottle of wine.

### IV

As JACOB'S POWER increased, so did his disrespect for law and government. He grew to think of himself as above such restrictions, to believe that they were for the little men without the money or audacity to flout institutions. His first overt act was somewhat in the nature of a joke. To his friends it brought chuckles of appreciation, but it raised a general furore that earned him the hatred of the public. Because of the embargo on shipping, all merchant vessels lay idle in the harbor. Competitors who observed that one of Jacob's Canton ships was being outfitted, questioned him. "Yah, she just need a leetle repairs," he explained. A few days later the papers carried a notice that Jacob's vessel had sailed for Canton. Public indignation demanded an accounting. Special government permission had been given, Jacob explained, because his boat was carrying home a Chinese mandarin who had visited the country. Inquiries reached the President himself, and investigation proved that Jacob's mandarin was a Chinese deck hand he had dressed in silks and ex-

hibited as an official in order to make good his ruse. It was too late to do anything; the vessel was on her way, and returned laden with tea which was then selling at a dollar a pound.

Jacob's fur trade, practically a monopoly, was spreading across the whole continent. He envisioned the time when his trading posts would reach from Canada to Oregon, and he set in motion the wheels which would accomplish this end. Dreamer of big dreams, he nevertheless skimped on the little things—and therein lay the seeds of disaster. French Canadian labor was cheaper than American labor, and so Jacob hired Canadians to man his boats and his trading posts. The first contingent of Jacob's hirelings arrived in New York, throwing the town into an uproar. The rowdy "Canucks" marched through the streets, bellowing lascivious songs and molesting women with their amorous advances. New Yorkers protested the invasion. But Jacob clung stubbornly to his policy—even when his ships were endangered by the brawling of the sailors who refused to accept discipline from their Yankee captains. His overland parties fared no better. The tales of their quarrels, their racial dissensions and their mistreatment of the natives are legend. But Jacob still refused to pay the price for American labor. He was self-righteously indignant when his Canadian lieutenants sold him out to their own Northwest Company, his most powerful competitors.

A hated nabob—a beloved wife. Sarah had not changed much with the years. Wealth sat easily upon her shoulders. The same warm smile and friendly manner, the same simple domestic routine. She felt sorry to see her husband's unpopularity—"Old Skinflint" was the name most often applied to him. She upbraided him for his readiness to foreclose small mortgages held against the property of poor widows. But Jacob went on, driven by a power he could not himself understand. "More money, more houses, more land. Yah, Sarah, more, more, more!"

But more happiness? "Ach, Sarah, I am nod happy." His youngest daughter, Eliza, had fallen victim to his social ambition. Eliza loved a young dentist; but Jacob, feeling that the Astor

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millions deserved a European title, demanded that she marry a Swiss nobleman. Sarah sided with her daughter, but Jacob was not the one to be thwarted by his women. Eliza married the nobleman. Her health, never too robust, began to fail alarmingly from the moment of her marriage. With some feeling of remorse, Jacob spent a goodly part of his fortune in taking her from one European health resort to another. But not even his money could save her. When Eliza died, it was a sorrowful father that embarked upon his homeward journey. His one consolation was that Sarah would be there to solace him. As though fate had conspired against the man who had so flagrantly defied the laws of generosity, she now punished him with one blow after another. The ship hit heavy seas, was tossed about for days. Jacob, his blustering vanity forgotten, begged the captain to turn back and to set him ashore. "I vill pay you a tousand dollars, five tousand, ten tousand." The other passengers enjoyed themselves hugely at the spectacle of the mortgage miser reduced to unreasoning terror.

While these negotiations were being carried on, the storm subsided and the vessel continued on her homeward passage. But more tragedy awaited Astor upon his arrival. There was no Sarah to greet him. Instead, his son William met him at the pier, to break the news of Sarah's death.

An end to happiness. But no end to greed. There were definite indications that the scramble for excessive fortunes was coming to a halt. Industry was about to settle into the era of small business and small profit. The East had been opened to many merchants, and prices had become stabilized. The fur trade, as Jacob had known it, was over. In England he had observed that silk was beginning to take the place of fur in the manufacture of hats. Moreover, the very magnitude of the fur trade had been the cause of its decline. Jacob's trappers had killed off the fur-bearing animals so recklessly that they threatened to become extinct. The man who dreamed of unlimited golden eggs had killed the goose that laid them.

And so he sold his interest in the fur trade and dedicated his voracity to the real estate business. By his foresight he had acquired vast holdings of land which were growing in value beyond his wildest expectations. The narrow little island of Manhattan, unable to push outward, began to push upward. And Jacob held most of the strategic points. For anyone foolish enough to mortgage a piece of property that he could foreclose, he felt only contempt. "Dumkopf!"

Life was drawing to a close. Something must be done to perpetuate his name. He commissioned Washington Irving to write a book about him and to call it *Astoria*. And he ordered a whole block of houses to be torn down on lower Broadway, to be replaced by a building called the *Astor House*.

But there was one thing he could not order. A new lease on life. As his age increased, he yearned for the company of young people. After a good dinner, he loved to join the youngsters at the piano and to sing sentimental songs. The fact that he had just put some widow out of her home would in no way detract from his enjoyment of the maudlin ballads that he sang. He liked nothing better than the deference paid him by the young. Whenever he finished a song he stood shaking with the effort, saliva drooling from his colorless old lips, and beamed like a schoolboy at the compliment of some pretty girl. "I sing gut, nicht wahr?" It never occurred to him that his presence was undesirable, especially when partial paralysis made it necessary for a footman to stand beside him and guide the food to his trembling mouth.

Jacob fought death with the same dogged determination with which he had fought poverty. Paralyzed, suffering from insomnia, he clung to the bare threads of existence. Unable to digest any solid food, he was kept alive on breast milk. With almost no blood left in the wornout frame, but with a fierce glitter in his eye, he was tossed in blankets to stimulate circulation. One day from the heaving blanket he berated an agent who complained that he could not collect rent from a poverty-stricken woman. "You could get it if you was firm enough," Jacob managed to



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gasp. "Go back und try again, und don't come here till you get it." In desperation the agent appealed to Jacob's son, William. William counted out the money, handing it to the distracted man. "See," Jacob said gleefully, "you just have to be smart with these lazy dumkopfs."

At last, in his eighty-sixth year, death triumphed over his stubborn resistance. He had come to America with fifty cents. He went to his grave leaving behind him thirty million dollars.



# **DANIEL BOONE**

*Important Dates in the Life of Daniel Boone*

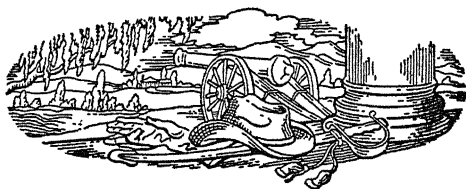
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|---|---|
| 1735—Born, Pennsylvania.                    | 1775—Founded the stockade of Boonesborough. |
| 1753—Moved, with father, to North Carolina. | 1776—His daughter captured by Indians.      |
| 1754—Married Rebecca Bryan.                 | 1777—Fought Indians.                        |
| 1765—Explored the Tennessee Wilderness.     | 1778, January 1—Captured by Indians.        |
| 1769-71—Explored Kentucky.                  | June 16—Escaped.                            |
| 1773—Started with family for Kentucky.      | 1780—Brother killed by Indians.             |
| Son slain by Indians.                       | 1795—Moved further West.                    |
|   | 1820—Died, Missouri.                        |

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# Daniel Boone

1735–1820

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**D**EEP SILENCE, and the snow-blanketed forest brooding in mystery. A young man finished carving letters on the bark of a huge oak. Sheathing the long hunting knife, he stepped back to view the handiwork.

*D. Boone kilt a bar hear 1754*

A sound reached the youth's ears. He slipped noiselessly behind the tree. Frontiersmen, with senses trained to detect the faintest signs of danger, hid first and investigated afterwards. It was no childish game they played, but a grim battle for existence where a few seconds' negligence might cost a life.

Within a few feet of his hiding place an Indian passed, townward bent and, therefore, probably friendly. So quietly did the Indian make his way through the snow, that his footsteps would have been inaudible to ears untrained in forestcraft. All too often had some townsman been caught unaware, never to be heard from again. Nor could the settlers be too sure even of the friendly Indians who might, upon slight provocation, turn to relentless enemies. In Daniel's mind all this knowledge was instinctive. A sixth sense guided his actions. Taking a course par-

allel to that of the savage, and careful always to keep a good distance, he walked toward the village. Inured since infancy to hardship, he was unmindful of the wet clothing that, stiff with freezing, grazed his hard young body. From his belt hung knife and powder horn. The small bear hung head downward, its feet pegged across the long gun which Daniel carried over his two shoulders, yoke fashion.

Here in the Yadkin Valley was true wilderness. After the settled towns of Pennsylvania, Daniel's heart thrilled to the vast unexplored tracts of woodland—the abode of wild beasts and savages. The old restlessness had seized him again. Of late more settlers had arrived in his neighborhood. With cabins springing up as fast as mushrooms, some scarcely a mile apart, he felt cramped. "A good gun, a good horse, and a good wife" were all that were necessary to a man's happiness, he had said. And now the homesteaders were thronging in, bringing with them the customs and appurtenances of civilization. Time to move on and find elbow room.

A roving tribe, the Boones. Solid Quaker stock, migrated from lovely Devon, in England, to Pennsylvania. Thence to North Carolina. And always with an eye to the surveying of more land. Here was young Daniel, in whom all the wanderlust of his forebears seemed concentrated and whose foot ever tingled with the urge to be off.

That urge had been stilled for a while when, as a wagoner, he followed Gage's men into the campaign against the Indians. A fateful trip. The ghastly slaughter of Gage's men had filled him with horror. The trip had been fateful in more ways than one. For then he had met and talked with Finley, first white man to travel beyond the mountains and deep into the wilderness. By the flickering campfire and on the hot dusty trail he had listened to Finley's tales of *Kaintuck*—that lush virgin land where the wild cane grew far above a man's head, where forest and river teemed with game, so that a man must be careful lest he kill more than he had need for.

Emerging from the forest, Daniel could see in the distance the smoke curling from his own chimney. Rebecca would be waiting with a sigh for his safe return. What would she say to this news, that the wilderness was beckoning him with a lure he no longer had the strength to resist? A grand wife, Rebecca! Smiling, he slackened his pace and allowed his mind to travel back over the days of their meeting. Surely there never had been such another courtship!

## II

WITH DANIEL it had been love at first sight, and all evidence pointed to reciprocation on the part of the bright-eyed Rebecca. But, while the Boones were courageous, they were also cautious—looking well before they leaped. He laughed aloud now, remembering the little drama he had staged to test her patience. Playing with his hunting knife, he had cut her most treasured article of clothing. A fine white cambric apron, irreplaceable finery here on the frontier. Rebecca, with never a rebuke, had smiled sweetly. “Don’t you worry, Daniel. The tear is nothing at all.” And so she had the gentle nature he sought, and he could proceed to carry out the gesture required of a young man seriously courting.

Bringing to the cabin of his betrothed a deer which he’d slain, he skinned and quartered the beast before the assembled friends. Proof that he could provide for a family. Much comment accompanied the operation. The girls teased Daniel about the amount of blood and grease he had smeared on his shirt. Daniel smiled good-naturedly, biding his time. When all were set about the festive board, he stared soberly into his jug of milk. “You, too, like my shirt, have missed many a washing.” A gasp, and then laughter. He was a one who could jest as well as be serious, that Daniel.

So then they had been married. In symbolic gesture, Rebecca was transferred from the back of her father’s horse to that of her new husband. After this ceremony the feasting began. Liquor

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS AMERICANS

flowed freely, and tongues wagged gaily. The young couple were escorted to their loft quarters, recipients of much sound advice and many a coarse jest. On the frontier there was no room for delicacy. Men needed sons to help in the fields, to join the hunt. That was why men married, and none ever thought to pretend otherwise.

Daniel was nearing his cabin now, his thoughts back to the present. Crossing the threshold he was aware of an atmosphere of festivity. In the semi-darkness he saw by the fireplace a peddler, his pack open on the floor. The family stood about, yearning over the merchandise. And the peddler himself—surely he was fate in disguise, to have appeared on this day of all days. For when his eyes had accustomed themselves to the twilight, Daniel recognized in the peddler that very man Finley upon whom his thoughts had dwelt all day—that adventurer whose tales of Kaintuck were the source of his restlessness to be off and away. A restlessness, however, about which he was afraid to speak to Rebecca.

Daniel need never have felt hesitancy where his wife was concerned. When the supper things were cleared and Rebecca had seated herself at her spinning wheel, they talked. Finley's words painted a picture of a friendly fertile land, waiting for the mere claiming of it. As the logs crackled in the fireplace, sending dancing shadows about the cabin, husband and wife listened. Rebecca's foot became still upon the treadle, her hand holding the thread, as she looked at Daniel. Almost fearfully he met her gaze. She smiled and nodded. Daniel knew that she saw the thoughts in his mind, that she gave her consent. Knew, too, that always there would be this understanding between them. His heart filled with love and pride.

### III

OTHER EYES than Daniel's were turned toward the new land. And there were other ears willing to listen to the tales of plenty.



Taxes in North Carolina were high, and money was scarce. Then, too, the coming of so many settlers had driven the game away. Daniel's love for land did not include the tilling of it. Hunting was not only a necessity, it was also the very life-blood of Daniel. As soon as his son James was able to walk, Daniel had taken him on long trips, imparting to him his own knowledge of woodlore. In the bitter cold he had carried the boy beneath his leather coat for warmth. And now James had attained to manhood and would make a fine companion for adventuring into the wilderness.

There were many who had listened to Daniel's stories and were ready to follow him. Among them were a few rich adventurers who saw that civilization would be spreading beyond its present boundaries and that there would be purchasers later for lands claimed now. If ever there was a man who could lead them to the Kaintuck and appraise the most valuable tracts, that man was young Boone.

And so a band of men set forth across the mountains, along the Warrior's Trace, under the leadership of Daniel and Finley. They had the utmost confidence in Daniel Boone as their shepherd. For he had mastered the art of gunsmithing, and had learned to make his own powder. The forest was a book to him, each snapped twig or crushed leaf a page to be read and its message acted upon. None more familiar than Daniel with the tricks that the Indians might employ, and with the safest means for outwitting them.

For the savages he had a deep liking, calling them brothers. In return they admired the Great White Hunter, tales of whose prowess had gone before him. They considered it a happy day when they could outmaneuver him. It would be fine sport to capture him. You could admire a man and scare him at the same time. Besides, what business had he in their territory?

But the white men under Daniel Boone had grown careless. They camped at Dreaming Creek—symbolic name. Hunting in small parties and maintaining several camps, they piled high

stacks of pelts that would bring them wealth. Around their campfires at night they permitted themselves to relax. For as yet they had been unmolested by Indians . . .

When the blow came it was sudden. A band of Shawnees attacked Daniel Boone and one of his companions, John Stuart, who had gone ahead of the rest of the party. Goaded by the upraised tomahawks and the pricking of menacing arrows, Daniel and Stuart were compelled to disclose the several camps to their captors. Helplessly they looked on as the Indians plundered their camps. They had little doubt as to the fate that awaited them in the village to which they were being led. Every frontiersman was familiar with the tales of torture suffered by the white captives at the hands of the Indians. Few victims ever expected quarter when taken.

But the Shawnees meant no real harm to the Great White Hunter. They would just frighten him away from their land, that's all. Within a few days they released him with a warning to return whence he had come and to trespass no more on Shawnee soil.

#### IV

DISHEARTENED by their losses, many of the men turned homeward. A few, still confident, pushed on. But as weeks lengthened into months, the constant attacks of the Indians wore down their courage. In small companies they turned their footsteps back, until only Daniel and his brother Squire remained.

And now a new danger confronted them. Their ammunition was almost exhausted. Without the tools to hunt, a man must starve. Squire, it was decided, would return for supplies, while Daniel would travel as far as possible alone. Left by himself in the wilderness, with a volume of *Gulliver's Travels* for his only company, he hunted and explored by day. By night he hid in caves or in secluded camps. There were surprise attacks, but Daniel's sixth sense was functioning. Many a time he saved him-

self by rolling into the underbrush just as the enemy entered his camp.

His brother at last returned with supplies—which were promptly stolen by Indians who had pretended friendship. Back again to the settlement went Squire for new supplies, and Daniel forged on alone. He explored the whole of the lush Kaintuck. Returning to North Carolina, he brought glittering reports of that rich terrain. There were many who listened eagerly, and they were ready to follow into the "Promised Land."

Again he set forth, this time with a group of forty adventurers, to build the wilderness road. Several groups of surveyors had preceded this party. The Indians, infuriated by the ever increasing numbers of white men who poured into their hunting grounds, had grown hostile. Daniel was now for the first time to meet with personal tragedy. His son James, while en route for supplies, was captured and tortured to death by a band of Shawnees . . . Yet Daniel still called the Indians his brothers, nor could he feel any great enmity toward them. "Forgive them, Father, they know not what they do."

At long last the party reached the Great Salt Licks—the river where buffalo, in countless numbers, came to lick at the salt deposits. Boonesborough they named the spot, and set about building a fort and staking out claims. They organized a government and a militia. Daniel was appointed Lieutenant, and then Captain. Disputes arose and Daniel was appointed Judge. Beneath a huge elm tree he meted out justice. Of the law he had but slight knowledge; his system of jurisprudence was as individual as his spelling. But the settlers were satisfied in their choice, and no one ever disputed his decisions.

Under the elm the small community held its first religious service, on an April day in 1776. The eighteenth it was—a fateful day here as well as in faraway Boston.

## V

IN THE KAINTUCK as in Massachusetts, the settlers were suffering at the hands of the British. But with a difference. Here in Kaintuck the English were stirring up the Indians against the white men, providing them with arms and liquor and—indispensable fighting material to the savage—war paint by the hundreds of gallons. Renegade Englishmen organized and directed the Indians in raids against Daniel and his men.

The Indians harassed the settlers constantly—for the most part in small marauding bands that stole livestock and destroyed crops. No open warfare had, as yet, taken place. Once, on a summer Sunday morning, Daniel's fourteen-year-old daughter Jemima, together with two companions, went out for a paddle in a canoe. So quiet was the countryside that they drifted farther than they had intended. Laughing and chatting in the sunlight, they were unaware of the sharp eyes that watched them from the tall cane along the bank. A too swift current, a short struggle with the unmanageable canoe, and the trippers were caught in shallow water. Swiftly and silently brown bodies rushed into the shallows, clapped hands over the girls' mouths and carried them into the cane. It was evening before the girls were missed and the alarm was spread. Daniel rushed from his cabin without stopping to don his moccasins.

For days they trailed the kidnapping party. At times it was possible to follow the trail by bits of torn clothing that the girls had managed to leave dangling from the bushes. But soon these signs stopped. The Indians, growing suspicious, had begun to watch them more closely. They were delighted with their prize, and did not intend to lose so valuable a captive as the daughter of "Wide Mouth." But Daniel plodded on, his woodcraft and his knowledge of Indian tricks guiding him instinctively in the right direction.

At last, a definite clue. A snake, freshly killed and still wrig-

## DANIEL BOONE

gling, showed Daniel that they were practically within earshot of the redskins. Cautioning his companions to silence, he whispered plans for a surprise attack. They crept silently forward to a clearing where the captors were preparing their midday meal of buffalo meat. The savages, thinking that they had thrown their pursuers off the trail, had grown incautious. The girls had already given themselves up to despair, when a shot rang out in the noon-day stillness. "That's my father!" Jemima cried exultantly. At Daniel's warning—"on the ground, quick!"—they threw themselves face downward. It was but a matter of minutes before all the Indians were dead or scattered, and the girls safe in the midst of their rescuers.

Again Daniel had outguessed his wily red brothers in the game that meant death, or enslavement in some smoke-grimed wigwam.

## VI

THINGS were slow to reach this outpost of civilization. The settlers knew nothing of the events that had taken place in the north until a much worn, much traveled copy of the *Virginia Gazette* arrived at Boonesborough, its pages weighty with the *Declaration of Independence*. Solemnly to the assembled company the great document was read aloud. That, and the news that America was now a nation, and Kentucky a part of it. Triumphant the tri-color flag graced the rude stockade, the settlers of Boonesborough rejoicing in their new status as citizens of a free America.

But the Indian troubles were starting anew and in earnest. Everywhere signs and messages gave warning that the Shawnees and the Cherokees were preparing for attack. Food at Boonesborough was becoming scarce. Now and then a brave hunter was able to slip past the lurking enemies and to bring back some game. But these expeditions were becoming more and more infrequent; mostly the settlers went meatless. And saltless. When the last salt had been used, it became necessary for some of the

settlers to go in groups far down the river to replenish the supply. A slow, tedious process. The river water was scooped in great iron kettles, boiled, and allowed to evaporate, leaving an almost infinitesimal deposit of the precious crystals. Always a hazardous undertaking, the danger was now multiplied by watchful enemy eyes. Daniel led the first relay to the salting grounds. A month at this arduous task, and the group was ready, with filled sacks, to return to the fort.

Several scouts, Daniel amongst them, had set out in different directions to secure game for the homeward journey and to make certain that the way was clear. At evening Daniel turned his horse toward the camp, pushing through a blinding snowstorm. The horse seemed nervous. Daniel looked back, to find four Shawnee braves upon him. There was no time to reach for his rifle. Rejoicing over their capture of "Wide Mouth," the braves gave promise not to attack the fort if Daniel would lead them to the "salt makers" and persuade them to surrender without a fight. This Daniel did, and the white men were led off to the Shawnee village. Fortunately, all of them were strong and used to hardship; for the trip was harrowing, and it was an Indian custom to tomahawk any prisoner who lagged by the wayside.

Daniel was adopted by Chief Blackfish. At an impressive ceremony, his name was changed to Sheltowec (Big Turtle); and, as a full fledged Shawnee, he received the admiration and respect of his red brothers. In all good faith the Shawnees accepted Daniel's promise that if they waited until spring he would persuade the white men at the fort, just as he had persuaded the party of salt makers, to surrender. Blackfish and his squaw sincerely loved their foster son, and were pleased with his seeming contentment in their home. Daniel's knowledge of firearms proved invaluable. He was entrusted with the repair of their guns. Amazing his captors with his tricks and delighting them with his promises of easy victory, he blinded them to the fact that he was secretly appropriating arms and ammunition—and biding his time.

As winter melted into spring, it became apparent that the

## DANIEL BOONE

Indians, too, were making secret preparations. Everywhere Daniel saw unmistakable signs that the savages were preparing a mass attack on the fort. He must make good his escape quickly, he decided. The opportunity arose when a hunting party surprised a flock of wild turkeys. The braves rushed after the frightened birds and Daniel was left alone with the squaws. His foster mother looked up to see him mounting a horse. "Where are you going, Sheltowee?" she demanded. "Blackfish will be angry."

"I must see my squaw and children," he answered calmly. "In a moon and a half I will bring her back to live with you." Then Daniel was off, riding furiously home to save his people.

## VII

DANIEL had spent four months as a prisoner, and four days of unspeakable hardship returning to the fort. His overworked horse had collapsed under him, and most of the journey had to be made afoot. But all this was as nothing to the anguish he felt as he gazed about an empty cabin. Rebecca, having given up hope of his return, had left for North Carolina, taking with her all the children with the exception of Jemima, now a staid matron of fifteen. As desolation spread through him, something soft rubbed against his leather stocking. The cat, left behind. He stooped and stroked the purring creature, grateful for one living thing in the house.

Daniel roused himself. No time for sorrow in the face of coming danger. Gathering his people about him, he urged them to rush completion of the fort. And none too soon. Blackfish, with a large army of braves, arrived to demand that Sheltowee make good his promise of peaceful surrender. The atmosphere at the fort on Daniel's return had been strained. A few escaped prisoners had told of his friendliness with the Indians, and there were those who were inclined to believe him a traitor. Now, as Daniel palavered with the enemy—creating a delay until promised reinforcements came—there were glances that mistrusted him. But

Daniel was their natural leader, and this was no time to split ranks.

After days of parleying, Blackfish became suspicious that Sheltowee did not mean to surrender. Quickly events shaped into open warfare, and a ghastly siege began—a seven day torment for the white men who listened to the sound of the digging as the Indians tunneled their way beneath the stockade. The eighth day seemed likely to mark the end, for the redskins were now under the fort. Flaming arrows had found their mark, and the sun-dried cabins were a roaring furnace. The last drop of water had been squeezed from its vessel. Determined not to surrender, the white men awaited their death, each in his own fashion. Some were praying, others still fighting, when a merciful rain came to their aid. Underneath the drenching downpour, the tunnel collapsed and the flames were extinguished. Admitting their defeat, the Indians departed. And now all the white men prayed—a prayer of thanksgiving.

But Daniel's troubles were just beginning. The seeds of suspicion, once sown, had found fertile soil. Daniel had been too friendly with his red brothers; this was something the white men could not understand. Daniel's cause received a further setback when a number of redskins, caught in the act of thievery, boasted that Sheltowee would take care of them. Daniel's spirits had reached a low ebb.

At last Rebecca returned; and Daniel, together with a handful who were still loyal to him, moved farther into the wilderness. And into further trouble. Called into court to bear witness in land disputes, he earned the enmity of those against whom he testified. Moreover, through his negligence in recording claims, he lost one by one the tracts to which he claimed ownership. And thus the passionate lover of the land was left in his old age landless and alone.

With the ever faithful Rebecca he took to the woods, living in a camp so primitive as to seem remarkable even to pioneer eyes. There in the forest, away from men's bewildering laws—laws in



which there appeared to be no justice—Daniel's spirits returned. Laughter came to his lips again, and a spring to his walk. And to his soul, a new longing for adventure. The Spanish governor of the Missouri wilderness had invited him to make his home there. The coming of such a man as Boone would bring other settlers in his wake. Land grants and official honors awaited him. Toward Missouri, then, Daniel and Rebecca set their steps—leaving once more behind them the civilization which they could not understand and the laws which had robbed them of all they possessed.

## VIII

IT WAS heartwarming for Daniel to find that there were people who still loved and trusted him. A hundred white families followed him into Spanish territory. True to their word, the Spaniards bestowed on him huge land grants and titles. One son had preceded him, and the rest followed. As the young Boones married and the grandchildren multiplied, Daniel became the center of an adoring circle. His tales were a never ending source of delight to the worshipful youngsters.

Late into his eighties Daniel hunted. So crippled was he with rheumatism that Rebecca went along to carry the rifle. When she died, a Negro attendant accompanied him. Even at this late date, a new adventure set Daniel dreaming. Tales of the Great Salt Lake had fired his imagination, and Daniel planned a trip to see the salt mountains and the salt springs. But his body, strong as it was, must eventually yield to the years. Partially paralyzed, he was confined to a chair.

A young artist, commissioned to paint his portrait, found him so palsied that a grandchild must stand behind the chair to hold his trembling head. Now and then he steadied, the old fire gleamed in his eyes, and his stories of the wilderness held listeners spellbound. His long white hair was still thick; a granddaughter combed it for him.

"Weren't you ever lost, Colonel?" inquired the young painter.

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"Cain't say as I was," Daniel's eyes twinkled. "But I was bewildered once, for nigh on four days."

Daniel's last outing was a gay one. Attending a party at his daughter's house, the old man overindulged. Adoring grandchildren saw to that. He insisted on riding home, though he had to be helped onto his horse and propped there. For three days he lay ill, and then died peacefully—surrounded by a loving family.

"A good gun, a good horse, a good wife." Daniel had had them all, and great adventure as well.

**SAM HOUSTON**

*Important Dates in the Life of Sam Houston*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1793—Born, Lexington, Va.  | 1829—Married Eliza Allen.                                       |
| 1806—Moved, with mother, to Tennessee.                               | His wife left him.  |
| 1808—Left home to live with Indians.                                 | Retired to live among Indians.                                  |
| 1811—Returned home and opened a school.                              | 1832—Went to Texas, appointed Commander-in-Chief of Texan Army. |
| 1813—Enlisted in U.S. Army.  | 1836—Defeated Santa Anna at San Jacinto.                        |
| 1814—Fought against Indians under General Jackson; severely wounded. | Elected President of the Republic of Texas.                     |
| 1817—Appointed Indian sub-agent.                                     | 1841—Reelected President of Texas.                              |
| 1818—Settled in Nashville to study law.                              | 1845—Texas annexed to U.S.                                      |
| 1819—Elected District Attorney.                                      | 1848-59—Served as U.S. Senator.                                 |
| 1821—Appointed Major General of Militia.                             | 1859—Elected Governor of Texas.                                 |
| 1823—Elected to Congress.  | 1863—Died, Huntsville, Texas.                                   |
| 1825—Elected Governor of Tennessee.                                  |   |

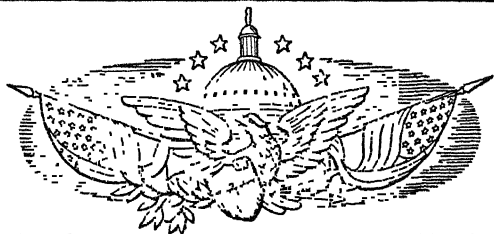
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# Sam Houston

1793-1863

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SAM HOUSTON came of a long line of fighting Irish—wild Ulstermen who defied European tyranny and battled their way to the new land of religious freedom, America. In his soul were the poetry and the uncompromising honesty of the Gaelic bards—a race of giants whose pride and courage earned them tragic ends.

At fourteen, when his father died, he was already a man. Well over six feet he stood, with a voice and a will that matched his stature.

The widowed mother turned her back upon civilization. Taking her nine strapping sons from Virginia, she marched them to the Tennessee wilderness. There they cleared the soil and built a cabin—a task well to the liking of their untamed spirit. Sam, tallest of these young Titans, was especially pleased with the new life. His entire education had been confined to reading and writing. When a copy of Homer's *Iliad* found its way across the Alleghenies into Sam's possession, he devoured its pages, all athrill to the ringing verse. He read the book again and again until its tattered leaves almost fell apart.

When he reached the age of fifteen, Sam's older brothers de-

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cided it was time to discipline the youth. They apprenticed him to the village storekeeper. This confinement Sam endured for a few weeks, and then he ran away to join a tribe of Cherokees. The brothers endeavored to persuade the truant to return. But Sam was adamant. "I prefer measuring deer tracks to measuring tape," he told them. "I can at least read a translation from the Greek here in the woods, and read it in peace." The Indians named him *Colon-neh* (the Rover).

Three years he dwelt among the Cherokees, their adopted darling. From them he learned forest craft. The oratory of the chiefs around their council fire satisfied his love for the dramatic. He absorbed their traits as naturally as he breathed the clean forest air. Their implacable enmity in the face of injustice, their remembrance of a favor bestowed, their fondness for little children, their joy in bright colors, their stoic courage—all these became integral parts of Sam's character.

His penchant for barbaric costumes and for bestowing gifts led him oftentimes to the shops across the Tennessee River, boundary between White and Indian territory. On these many excursions he incurred debts which he was determined to pay off. Bidding his Cherokee family *au revoir*, he left them with a promise to return as soon as his indebtedness was discharged.

With absolute faith in his ability to succeed in any undertaking, Sam opened a school. His fees were outrageously high by frontier standards. Yet his little schoolhouse was crowded, and he was soon able to discharge his obligations. The role of schoolmaster suited him. With flowered calico shirt, a long queue hanging down his back, he strutted before the enthralled youngsters. A sourwood stick for disciplinary measures and Sam's overwhelming personality kept the pupils on their toes. They studied well and they paid well. His creditors appeased, Sam closed the doors of the school. He had enjoyed himself immensely. Deciding now that teaching was his natural bent, he entered the academy at Maryville to prepare himself the better for the job. A few short

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weeks of books and classrooms, however, and Sam's enthusiasm had soured to distaste. Heading for the woods again, he left to rejoin the Cherokees.

News of war, and Old Hickory Jackson's valiant struggle with only a handful of men at his command. Sam halted his journey and enlisted as a private. When his friends told him he was foolish not to have applied for a commission, Sam retorted: "Go to with such stuff. I would rather honor the ranks than disgrace an appointment."

Sam's mother approved of his act. Placing a rifle in his hand, she said: "Never disgrace it, for I had rather all my sons fill one honorable grave than that one of them should turn his back. My door is open to brave men. It is eternally shut to cowards."

## II

JOINING Old Hickory's forces, Sam began immediately to distinguish himself. Before long he was a sergeant. At Horseshoe Bend he displayed the courage and the selfless disregard for his safety that were characteristic of his entire career. The Indians had thrown up earthen breastworks that for a time appeared impregnable. Jackson could not bring himself to order his men into certain slaughter, and the battle was at a standstill. But Sam waited for no orders. His reckless daring and his long legs carried him halfway up the defenses before an arrow in his thigh felled him. By that time the others, fired by his courage, stormed past him and captured the fort. Catching a hurrying soldier by the arm, Sam ordered him to pull the arrow from his thigh. The effort expended was more considerate than effective. Sam belated his rage. "Try it again. If you fail this time, I'll smite you to earth!" Frightened, the soldier tugged. The arrow left the flesh, but brought in its wake such a flow of blood that Sam had to be carried behind the lines for medical treatment. Seeing the young man's wound, Old Hickory ordered him to retire. Sam

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obeyed—just so long as his superior officer was looking. Jackson's back was no sooner turned than Sam was once more in the vanguard.

Only a few hundred of the Indians were left alive at the Bend. These had barricaded themselves in a cave. Jackson demanded that they surrender. They shouted angry defiance. Again Jackson refused to order his men to attack. The Redskins had the advantage, could pick off the attackers at their leisure. Another impasse, until Sam dashed headlong up toward the cave, and the rest followed him. A slug in the shoulder laid Sam low—this time, it seemed, past all rising. Swarming over and around him, his comrades captured the cave.

When the smoke of the battle had cleared, Sam's unconscious form was discovered beneath a mound of corpses. So far beyond help did he appear that the doctors refused to waste their time on him. But they had not counted upon Sam's spirit—nor upon the resilience of that amazing body. Though he lay without treatment through a day and a night, and then received only improper care, he clung tenaciously to the shreds of life. When at last he was carried on a litter through his mother's door, only his eyes were recognizable in the emaciated and bloody frame. Sam had come home a hero—a daredevil who could not be beaten save by his own gigantic emotions.

For weeks he lay half dead, willing himself slowly back to life. And then, still feeble from his unhealed wounds, he journeyed on horseback to New York for further treatment. But the cure was never complete. Through the rest of his life the wounds were to open under excessive strain, bringing him great suffering. But not for Sam Houston to complain of such little things.

His service had been rewarded with a lieutenant's commission. Everywhere he was hailed as the hero of Horseshoe Bend. A good man, the general said of him, to break up the smuggling rings that abounded along the shores of America. Among the smugglers who flaunted their evil trade almost unhampered were the Blackbirders—a band of pirates who sold black flesh cap-



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tured in Africa. Against them Sam proceeded with impetuous ardor. He had nearly succeeded in stamping out this menace, when the Government called him to deal with the Cherokees who were waxing warlike over the unfair treaty that had been foisted upon them.

Sam had little heart for his new task. To persuade his Indian friends to accept the terms of the treaty gave him no pleasure. But realizing that defiance could only mean heartbreak and eventual annihilation for themselves, he counselled acceptance. Having perfect trust in their white brother, and seeing the wisdom of his counsel, the Cherokees capitulated. For a time there was peace between the white men and the red.

Sam now returned to his unfinished job against the Blackbirders. These pirates had been backed by powerful interests who refused to take their setback as final. In Washington they put in motion wheels that would once more clear the way for their trade. Sam was the stumbling block in their path, and so they concentrated all their venom upon him. The Secretary of War called him to the capital to answer charges of misdealing. Between the Secretary and the rough-and-ready soldier an immediate antagonism developed. And though Sam offered every proof of his innocence—was exonerated and received public apology—he remained infuriated at the injustice of his treatment. Coming back to Nashville, he resigned his commission in the army and turned his thoughts to law. A fit profession for a man whose passions were oratory and justice.

He presented himself at the offices of James Trimble, a friend whose advice was encouraging. "You have all the necessary qualities for the successful practice of law. But it will require eighteen months of study." This idea Sam laughed to scorn. He had neither the time nor the money for such a protracted scholastic program. "I will be ready in six months," he prophesied. Six months later Sam passed his bar examinations and hung out his shingle in the town of Lebanon, Tennessee.

Sam's resources were practically non-existent; but from Isaac

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Golladay, a merchant of the town, he obtained unlimited credit. Just as Sam never forgave an affront, he never forgot a kindness. Though it took him thirty-five years to repay Isaac, he did so many times over, adding services that could not be measured in money. "The seed of generosity grows into a cluster of many-colored roses."

### III

AS A LAWYER Sam prospered from the first day of his practice. His classical speech and picturesque appearance, as well as his stalwart character, won universal admiration. It was not long before he was persuaded to enter politics. His rise in public life was fast and steady. Six feet six inches tall and weighing over two hundred pounds—his flamboyant attire in no way detracting from the picture—he dominated every group of which he was a part. At all times Sam remained a staunch admirer and follower of Jackson. They understood and appreciated each other, these two warhorses, and their relationship was that of father and son.

Sam's adopted state sent him to Washington as Senator. His farewell speech to Lebanon was typically half Homer, half Houston. "I was naked, and ye clothed me. I was hungry, and ye fed me." Over-dramatic, perhaps, but the sincerity was absolute, and this sincerity conveyed itself to his listeners. They wept.

In the Senate, Sam strove to tone his speech and manners down to Washington standards, but without success. Gulliver could not make himself inconspicuous amongst the Lilliputians. His political career was punctuated by a single duel. Old Hickory's advice on that occasion was homely and to the point. "Keep a bullet between your teeth," Jackson said. "You'll find that the bite will steady you." Sam emerged from the duel victorious, but with a horror for the then popular means of settling arguments. Forever after he put challengers off with scorn or humor. To one opponent he said: "I will not fight downhill." And to another who wished to avenge an insult, he replied: "I thought you were



*Daniel Boone*



*Sam Houston*

a friend. If a man can't abuse his friends, then who the hell can he abuse?"

Three terms he served in the Senate, then returned to Tennessee to run for Governor. His victory was overwhelming, and he brought to the Governorship all the fire and fight that had so far marked his headlong path. Tennessee adored its Sam. While in this office he married young and beautiful Eliza Allen. For a time it seemed that Sam's colorful cup was full to overflowing. Planning to run for a second term, and expecting another great victory, Sam was struck by a tragedy that shocked the country and sent him into the depths of despair and degradation. The lovely Eliza betook herself from the gubernatorial mansion and Sam's life. The state rocked with the scandal, and speculation ran rife.

It was typical of Sam's generosity and reverence for women, that he never uttered a word of reproach against his wife. Eliza, while loving another, had been forced by her ambitious parents into the marriage with Sam Houston. And now, suing for and obtaining a divorce which Sam refused to contest, she married the man of her choice. The blow to Sam's pride, however, had left its indelible mark. Resigning from the governorship, he prepared to leave public life forever. To the scandalmongers who made accusations uncomplimentary to both sides, Sam uttered threats only on behalf of Eliza. "If any wretch dares utter a word against the purity of Mrs. Houston," he threatened, "I will return and write the libel in his heart's blood."

He took a boat into the wilderness. A great depression had descended upon him. He felt he had betrayed the trust that Jackson had imposed upon him—that he had brought sorrow to the man he worshiped. He contemplated throwing himself overboard. At that moment a giant eagle swooped close to the deck, then flew screaming into the sunset. Sam's spirits rose; he felt that the bird's flight indicated a future for him in the West.

Once more Sam sought haven with the Cherokees, certain of a welcome. Chief John Jolly greeted him warmly, extending to him

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all the rights of citizenship in the tribe. "I heard that you were a great chief among your people," said the Indian. "I heard that a dark cloud had fallen on the white path you were walking. My wigwam is yours."

Taking again the name of Colon-neh, Sam gave himself up to drink with a wholeheartedness that would have killed a weaker man. For years the huge figure—blanketed and sprawled in drunken stupor—was a familiar sight on the streets of Fort Gibson. Yet such was the innate dignity of the man that no one ever dared to insult the "town drunk." The Indians sometimes nicknamed him *Old Souse*; but this was a term of affection, not of criticism. A half-breed squaw became his wife according to Indian custom. Tallahina lavished on her squawman a deep and tender affection. Sam treated her always with thoughtful respect. And though in time their destinies separated them, Sam never considered himself at liberty to remarry until her death.

Sam's sense of justice and his love for the Indian finally proved the instruments that brought about his redemption. The Cherokees were in sad plight, due to the ravishing of their land at the hands of unprincipled white men. Chief Oo-loo-tee-kag (John Jolly) begged his White Brother to intercede in their behalf. Sam could not find it in his heart to let this plea go unheeded. With terrific effort he pulled himself from his sodden state and journeyed to Washington, shepherding his little flock of Cherokees.

He was granted an immediate audience, Old Hickory's interest enabled him to get justice for the Cherokees. It was a sad meeting between the two warriors. Jackson now President; and Sam, a despised Squawman. Old Hickory urged his friend to take office, and thus to redeem himself. Sam refused. "I am through with the world of white men."

Into Texas, which at that time was a part of Mexico, Sam journeyed on a mission for his Indian friends. The ragged unkempt giant, as he rode into the sunset, little guessed what glory and fulfillment awaited him in that bright land. Sam loved Texas. Texas loved Sam. A new chapter had begun in his crowded

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career. He had come to Texas on a short visit. He remained there for the rest of his life.

### IV

IN TEXAS Sam's past met with no criticism. A man was judged there by his qualities alone. Old Drunk was soon known far and wide as Old Sam—a brave and honest man in a land where bravery and honesty were the order of the day. He warmed to the new life, and threw himself into it with his old-time zest.

Among his first acquaintances in Texas was Stephen Austin, one of the earliest settlers and a firm believer in the future of that country. These two men, immediately drawn to each other, formed a friendship which lasted their lifetime. Texas was then entering into the throes of her heroic struggle against the power-thirsty Santa Anna. The handful of colonists, weary of his double-dealing and oppression, had decided to arm themselves against him. Into the fray Sam threw himself joyfully, and was soon Commander-in-Chief of the Texas forces. There were dreadful days ahead for the gallant Texans, when only a man of Sam's caliber could have led them through to final freedom. There were many who thought that conciliation with Santa Anna was possible. One of these conciliators was Austin. He made the journey to Mexico to put before the Dictator a plea for the Texans. He found a drug-crazed tyrant who threw him into a dungeon. There he remained for two years. When finally he was released, he returned to Texas to find it already overrun with Santa Anna's troops who were destroying everything that lay in their path. He made his way to Sam Houston's side; Houston urged him to join in a revolt against the Mexicans. "There's no decency to be expected from them. We've got to meet force with force."

Attempting to whip the infuriated Texans into an orderly army was a colossal task. Most of the men in the ranks were loyal to Old Sam. But many of the officers, unused to discipline and

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eager for action, left in small bands, forming disorganized garrisons about the country and thus weakening the main body of the army.

But Sam did his best under the circumstances. And Sam's best was human endeavor pretty nearly at its best. His great soul understood the little soul of Santa Anna. He knew that he would need cunning against the blood-drunk dictator. Watching from afar the slaughter, as Santa Anna conquered first the garrison at the Alamo, then one by one the other isolated forts, Sam strengthened in his purpose. It was Sam's aim to entice Santa Anna into a trap where his own arrogance would prove his undoing.

At San Jacinto Sam achieved his purpose. With Santa Anna and his army lured into a cul-de-sac and lulled into a sense of false security, Sam and his five hundred men descended on the unsuspecting Mexicans, shouting: "Remember the Alamo!" In a battle that lasted eighteen minutes the Texans killed, captured or put to rout the entire force of the enemy with hardly a loss on their own side.

After a night of celebration, the Texans set out in search of whatever fugitives might have escaped into the forest. Above all, they wanted Santa Anna. Again Sam knew his man. "You will find the hero of Tampico," Sam told his soldiers, "making his retreat on all fours, dressed as an ordinary private." That was just how they found him. The meeting between the two generals was dramatic. Wounded in the leg, Sam sat propped against a huge tree. Santa Anna was brought before him. The blustering conqueror was now a sniveling bunch of rags, whining for the opium in his saddle bag. Sam ordered his men to administer the drug. His raw nerves soothed, Santa Anna regained some of his former swagger.

"I ask generosity for the vanquished," he demanded.

"You should have remembered that at the Alamo," was Sam's stern reply . . .

And now, thanks to Sam Houston, Texas was free of Mexican



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tyranny. Yet she was still in an unenviable position. Although Texas wished to be annexed to the United States, the United States did not wish to annex Texas. The question as to the disposal of the infant republic became a political football in Washington. For years it was tossed around from administration to administration and nobody did anything about it. Finally Sam Houston, as Governor of Texas, took the battered ball into his own strong hands. He entered into negotiations with France and England with a view to securing recognition for Texas as an independent empire. Yet this effort too, came to naught. When it appeared that Texas was to remain forever suspended in the political void, a treaty was concluded under President Tyler (1844), and Texas became a part of the United States.

Sam served a second term as Governor. And almost simultaneously with his reelection a great happiness came to him. At forty-seven he married Margaret Moffette Lea. His new bride was twenty-one. Their union proved perfect. For the first time he knew the companionship and the domestic comfort that his romantic soul had always craved. And his wife brought him the gift of robust sons and daughters to gladden his days and to receive the heritage that was his to bestow.

As Senator from Texas, Sam once again trod the floor of the Congressional Chamber. More picturesque, more forceful than ever, he was a figure to fire the imagination. But new heartbreak awaited him. On the one side stood the abolitionists, whose cause—though he disliked the Northerners—he espoused. Ranged on the other side were the Southerners, threatening secession. In the center stood Old Sam Houston—alone. His clear vision showed him what war would mean for his beloved South. The Secessionists could only bring disaster upon themselves, he pointed out. His words fell on deaf ears. Fearful of what lay ahead for Texas in the event of her joining the Confederates, Sam left the Senate and tried to stem the tide of war sentiment that was sweeping his state. His farewell address to the Senate was impassioned, and without compromise. He prayed for unity, and for peace.

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS AMERICANS

Only Sam Houston could influence Texas in the right direction, and he was determined to do his utmost. Though weary and depressed upon his return, he shook himself free of his lassitude when he saw the blind hatred into which Texas had fallen. Once more he plunged into the race for the Governorship. He lashed the people with invective and insult. He caressed them with humor and affection. His campaign became a triumphal tour. Everywhere crowds cheered him, laughing or weeping at his words. "Texas will stand by the Union," he shouted. "It is all that can save us as a nation!" And the crowds shouted back their approval.

But their enthusiasm was for Old Sam, not for his cause. Though, as before, his election was a landslide, his efforts at maintaining peace were futile. There came a day—he had long expected it—when walking into his office, he found his place filled by the Lieutenant Governor. Calmly he gathered his personal belongings. With head high he walked out, through a lane of jeering and insulting men. Texas had seceded, and Sam was no longer wanted. A Union army, with fifty-thousand men massed at the border, was ready to enter Texas. They offered Sam a commission as Major-General. He refused. He loved the Union, had given thirty years of his life laboring in its behalf—but he was loyal to Texas even in the hour of her folly. A strange, twisted, chaotic tangle of destiny, this war of brother against brother, child against father. Sam Houston's son and namesake commanded a Texas regiment in the Confederate army.

Sam's abolitionist sympathies had earned him in many places the name of traitor. As is the case with all great personalities, he had numerous enemies. By these he was as thoroughly hated as he was loved by his admirers. Among the most violent of the mud slingers was Judge Campbell. One day, when young Sam's regiment had asked Old Sam to review it, he appeared in the very uniform in which he had defeated Santa Anna and given Texas her freedom. The uniform was in rags now. At his side hung the old sword, fastened with the same buckskin thong. Throwing

## SAM HOUSTON

aside his cane, Old Sam hobbled forward, bellowing orders. Smartly the young soldiers responded, thrilled by the presence of their hero.

"Do you see Judge Campbell or his son here?" he demanded.

"No!" shouted the regiment.

"Do you see old and young Sam Houston here?" he roared.

The soldiers understood his point. The Houstons were loyal to their state—their life's blood, hers. Their answer was such an appreciative shout as to bring tears to the eyes of Old Sam. There were tears still in his eyes as he hobbled away. He foresaw only too clearly the fate of the brave young men, the flower of Texas.

Retiring to a small log cabin—and to poverty—Sam sat down to await the inevitable outcome of the war. Even the early victories for the South did not cheer him. He knew that these triumphs would be only momentary, that they must give way to the superior arms and manpower of the Union forces.

When news of the fall of Vicksburg reached him, he realized that it was the beginning of the end. The emotional strain was too much. Taking to his bed, he rose no more. For weeks he lay, sometimes conscious, more often in a coma. In a lucid moment just before the end, he was heard to murmur: "Texas, Texas."



**STEPHEN C. FOSTER**

*Important Dates in the Life of Stephen C. Foster*

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1826—Born, Allegheny City, Pa.                 | 1850—Became professional song writer. |
| 1840—Composed Tioga Waltz.                     | 1851-54—Popularity at its height.     |
| 1842—Composed Open Thy Lattice, Love.          | 1854-63—Popularity waned.             |
| 1846-50—Employed as book-keeper in Cincinnati. | 1864—Died, New York.                  |

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# Stephen Collins Foster

1826-1864

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**J**ULY 4, 1826—a memorable day in American history. For that day witnessed the death of Thomas Jefferson and the birth of Stephen Foster. The author of American independence and the creator of America's songs.

Stephen was the last of seven children the oldest of whom, Charlotte, was sixteen at the time of Stephen's birth. Sixteen, fourteen, ten, seven, five, three, and now the baby. A stairway of tousled heads that led the way down into the Valley of Poverty. Their father, William Foster, had the virility to produce a large family, but he lacked the ability to provide for them. Stephen's childhood was a continual succession of migrations—from Lawrenceville (Pennsylvania) to Harmony, from Harmony to Pittsburgh, from Pittsburgh to Allegheny, from Allegheny to Poland (Ohio), from Poland to Youngstown, and so on and on. Always they went in quest of a better job for Father Foster, and always the quest ended in disappointment.

Schooling for the Foster children was, under the circumstances, intermittent—to the sorrow of Mr. and Mrs. Foster and to the delight of young Stephen. On the first day that he attended

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS AMERICANS

school, his teacher set him to studying the alphabet through a series of silly jingles. She began with the letter A:

*In Adam's fall  
We sinnèd all.*

And then she went on, from absurdity to absurdity, until she came to the letter Z:

*Zaccheus he  
Did climb a tree  
His Lord to see.*

One by one she made the boys recite the jingles after her. Finally it was Stephen's turn. He stood up, clenched his little fists, opened his mouth, "and"—we are quoting his brother Morrison—"with a yell like that of a Comanche Indian, he bounded bareheaded out of the schoolroom and into the open fields."

There was so much nonsense in the school-books, and so much that was sensible in the fields and along the river banks. Great fun to play truant from school and to watch the gaily painted boats drifting down the stream. Listen to those boatmen singing:

*There is a wild boar in the wood,  
Dillum dan diddly, dillum dan diddle.  
He eats our flesh and drinks our blood,  
Tun-a-qui quiddle-quo-quum.*

And even better is the song of the black folk, on that flat-bottom boat with the paddle wheels:

*Lis'en to de lam's—all a-cryin',  
Lis'en to de lam's—all a-cryin',  
Lis'en to de lam's—all a-cryin',  
I wanta go to heaben when I die.*

A great problem to his parents, this youngest son of theirs. Neglected his books and wasted all his time on those silly songs. From infancy he had loved to hum and to drum. One day he sent a letter to his father—Mr. Foster was working in Pittsburgh



while the family lived at Youngstown. "My dear father," he wrote, "I wish you to send me a commic songster, for you promised to. if I had my pensyl I could rule my paper. or if I had the money to by Black ink But if I had a whistle I would be so taken with it I do not think I would writ atall . . ."

When Stephen expressed this desire to give up his writing for a whistle, he was a "hopeless little rebel" of ten.

## II

HE GOT his whistle. But he didn't give up his writing. At last he found a congenial teacher, Mr. John Kelly, who taught at the Stockton Academy and whose Irish sense of humor saw nothing wrong in a boy who preferred his music to his books. He encouraged Stephen in his *musical* education, and thereby he inspired him with a respect for *all* education. Under the tolerant eye of Mr. Kelly, Stephen learned to play several instruments, to read and to write music, and to compose verses for his own tunes.

Haunting tunes. Memories of snatches he had heard on his riverside excursions. Songs of sailors heaving at their ropes; of darkies unloading bales of cotton at the wharves; of pioneers facing toward the West, their eyes aflame with the dreams of new adventures and new hopes. Songs of poverty—"hard times, come again no more"—; of joyous nonsense—"ain't it dinner? ho, ho! ain't it dinner? tell me so"—; of buck-and-wing dances—"lef' foot dance, right foot res', ah shakes mah shoulders an' grins mah bes'"—; happy-go-lucky tunes of the riverman—"hi-O, away we go, floating down the river on the O-hi-O." The scattered syllables of many tongues gathered together from many lands. The fusing rivulets of sound that were to merge into the great Folk Song of America.

And then, an exciting adventure for Stephen Foster. "The minstrels are in town!"

Stephen had never been to a minstrel show. His first experience of the black-face comedians was like the opening of a new

door in his life. The racket, the abandon, the rhythm, the music, the gaiety of it all—*this* was America singing! If only some day *he* could write a song for these minstrels!

But he was too young as yet—only thirteen. And he knew too little of the lives of the Negroes, of life in general. And, worst of all, his parents disapproved of his “song-scribbling.” He was no longer under the tutelage of Mr. Kelly. A friend of the Fosters—they called him “Brother William”—offered to pay his tuition at Athens Academy. A sleigh ride of 400 miles, a great loneliness, and a promise, exacted by Brother William, that he would neglect his music in favor of his other studies. “My dear Brother,” he wrote, “I will promise not to be seen out of doors between the hours of nine and twelve A.M. and one and four P.M. Which hours I will attribute to study . . . I will also promise not to pay any attention to my music untill after eight o’clock in the evening . . .”

He had yielded to the pressure of his elders. But the artistic urge was too strong within him. Before he left school, he composed (in 1841) his first important piece, the *Tioga Waltz* for flutes. “A pretty good musician,” said the head master, “but a poor student.” Stephen was sent home without a diploma.

For five years he remained at home, the “dunce” of the family; and then he was sent to Jefferson College—and stayed there exactly seven days. He returned to his idleness and his music. Private tutoring for a while in mathematics, French and German—and constant improvisation on his flute. During his leisure hours he took to browsing about the music stores of Pittsburgh. In one of these stores he met an immigrant German musician, Henry Kleber, who introduced him to the songs of Schubert. “Gosh, I didn’t know there was so much beauty in the world!”

“You would like to write like Schubert, yes?”

“I’d give my right hand to do it!”

“Nonsense, *mein Freund*, you need both your hands for practicing your compositions on the piano. Here, let me teach you how.”

And Kleber proceeded to teach Foster not only how to har-

monize but how to play his own compositions. "Some day, my boy, you may be perhaps the American Schubert, yes?"

"Please don't make fun of me, Mr. Kleber!"

"I'm not making fun of you. Heaven has gifted you with a strange sacred talent. Be faithful to this talent, *mein Knabe*."

And faithful he remained to it, under the kindly tutelage of Mr. Kleber. "He would sit in the evening at the piano," writes his brother Morrison, "and improvise by the hour beautiful strains and harmonies which he did not preserve, but let them float away like fragrant flowers cast upon the flowing water . . . At times tears could be seen on his cheeks . . . so sensitive was his nature to the influence of true poetry combined with music . . ."

And thus, wrapped in his music and his dreams, he drifted idly along through his adolescent years. He hated formal society. Once a lady invited him to a party. "Bring Stephen," she said to his brother, "but not without his flute."

"Tell the lady," retorted the young musician, "that you can bring the flute, but without Stephen."

A morose, unsocial, impractical loafer, thought his parents. He would dream his days away on the sidelines while the stream of life rushed by.

Yet Stephen Foster was not a recluse. He loved the companionship of cheerful, singing spirits like himself. He joined a club of youngsters who picnicked in the summer and skated in the winter. And sang. Folk tunes, sentimental ballads, roisterous love songs. "Our repertory is getting rather thin," complained one of the members. "I wish we had something new."

"I've just written something," said Foster, hesitantly. "Would you like to try it?" He took a sheet out of his pocket. "The name of the song is *Low'siana Belle*."

This was the beginning of a flood of tunes that came pouring out of his heart for his boon companions. And then, one day at twenty, he composed a piece—"just another of my silly trifles"—which marked a departure in American folk music. *Old Uncle Ned*. America caught up the song, and critics and public alike

realized that a new voice had come upon the scene. "There is something in the melody of *Uncle Ned*," reported the *Albany State Register*, "that goes directly to the heart, and makes Italian trills seem tame."

Stephen Foster had joined the stream of life—in his own unique way.

### III

BUT NOT in his parents' way. They still persisted in making a practical businessman out of him. They secured him a job as bookkeeper in Cincinnati.

A dismal ride on a steamboat, a dismal prospect ahead of him. To while away the time, he composed one of his songs. A rollicking song of adventure and love, yet with a catch in the throat. It sang its way into the hearts of the passengers, the sailors, the dark and the white folk throughout the country. Within a short time it became an American classic. "Oh, Susanna, oh don't you cry for me; I've come from Alabama wid my banjo on my knee."

And Foster sat in the counting-house, and added and subtracted figures, and dreamed of the day when he could devote all his time to his music. He secured a publisher for two of his songs. Net result—the publisher made ten thousand dollars, the composer made nothing.

More dreary days in the counting-house. A brief vacation, a trip to the South, new scenes, new music—the Negroes at their toil, in their prayers, at their play. *Away Down Souf*, *My Old Kentucky Home*, *Old Black Joe*.

He gave up his bookkeeping and signed a contract with a publisher. A very unbusinesslike contract, but promising enough to marry on—with the wolf at the door as a lifelong companion. He married a boyhood sweetheart of his, Jane McDowell—Jeanie with the light brown hair. A rapturous honeymoon, and then they lived unhappily ever after. Stephen Foster was too poor in worldly goods and too rich in boon companionship to make

a satisfactory husband. In an effort to patch up their troubles, they took a trip to the South together; and then for a while they tried to go their separate ways. But they were too fond of each other to live apart, and too irritable toward each other to live together. They moved to New York, to Pittsburgh, to Allegheny City, seeking everywhere for that peace which nowhere could be found. He took to excessive drink—"drink is an effort to fill an aching void"—and this was another cause for friction. He smoked until his throat swelled almost shut and for a time his life was given up.

But he recovered—for further suffering and further creation. His creation came out of his suffering. One day he sat in the park, playing with his dog—an Irish setter he had received as a present shortly after his marriage. It was rarely he received presents now, or ever saw his friends. They had deserted him, one by one. Two stray dogs, with nary a one to greet them with a pleasant word. Stephen Foster smiled a bitter smile, and then a thought struck him. Snatching a piece of paper out of his pocket, he jotted down a tribute to his dog—a sentimental song, yet inspired with the emotion of a universal experience:

*Old Dog Tray's ever faithful,  
Grief cannot drive him away;  
He's gentle, he is kind,  
I'll never, never find  
A better friend than Old Dog Tray.*

Another household song for America, another period of heart-aches for its creator. He was too sensitive to suffering and to song. The source of his genius was the cause of his affliction. Occasionally he tried to compose a song full of gaiety and laughter, as an antidote to his own sad spirit:

*Some folks like to sigh,  
Some folks do, some folks do;  
Some folks long to die,  
But that's not me nor you.*

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Several stanzas of this rollicking make-believe at merriment, and then he reveals the true picture of his heart. People toil and save—yes they do, yes they do—to what end? “To buy themselves a grave.”

More and more attempts at forgetfulness in drink, night-long serenades along the streets of Allegheny, and days of stupor illumined by flashes of creation. At last his wife left him for good. He lived now literally in the gutter, peddling out his songs for the price of a drink. Shabby, hungry and unkempt—there were days when he had only an apple for dinner—he was taken to task by his brother Morrison. “Stevie, why do you go around looking so bedraggled? Aren’t you afraid of being insulted?”

“Don’t worry about me,” retorted Stephen. “No gentleman *will* insult me, and no other man *can*.”

And the summer days passed, and the autumn, and then came the winter snows. One day he set out in a blizzard to sell his latest song, *Willie Has Gone to the War*. He had no overcoat. His shoes were cracked. The snow slushed through his raggedy covering and soaked him to the skin. Some time later an acquaintance discovered him in a dingy basement that Foster occupied rent free. The composer’s face was bleeding. He had cut himself on a broken pitcher.

“How long have you been like this?”

“Oh, I don’t know. Days, weeks, months, maybe years.” Foster was almost delirious.

They took him to a charity ward in the hospital. And there, on January 13, 1864, he jotted down on a piece of paper his farewell to the world. “Dear friends and gentle hearts.”

He was thirty-eight years old when he died. In his pocket after his death they found exactly thirty-eight cents.

**ROBERT E. LEE**

*Important Dates in the Life of Robert E. Lee*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1807—Born, Stratford, Va.   | tenant-Colonel of 2nd Cavalry.                               |
| 1818—Lost father.   |  |
| 1825—Entered West Point.  | 1859—Captured John Brown at Harpers Ferry.                   |
| 1829—Graduated second in his class.                               | 1861—Appointed Commander-in-Chief of Virginia forces.        |
| 1831—Married Mary Randolph Custis.                                | 1862—Made military adviser to Jefferson Davis.               |
| 1834—Became assistant to chief engineer of U.S. Army.             | 1865—Appointed Commander-in-Chief of all Confederate armies. |
| 1847—Made Lieutenant-Colonel in Mexican War.                      | Surrendered to General Grant.                                |
| 1849—52—Employed in construction of harbor defenses at Baltimore. | Elected president of Washington College.                     |
| 1852—Became superintendent of West Point.                         | 1870—Died, Virginia.   |
| 1855—Left to serve as Lieu-                                       |  |

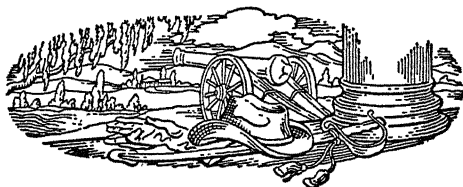


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# Robert Edward Lee

1807–1870

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THE TIDE of the Civil War was turning against the South. Inadequate forces, imperfect equipment, unfavorable weather, incompetent generalship on the part of Lee's subordinates—all these factors were proving too much for the almost superhuman efforts of General Lee. The newspapers accused him of poor leadership, demanded his removal from the high command, sneered at his "West Point tactics," insinuated that he had won his post merely through his family connections—his wife was the step-granddaughter of George Washington. "A pretty coxcomb in the saddle," was the comment of one of the editors, "and a dismal failure on the battlefield."

The storm of abuse was growing daily more intense. The President of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis, tried to defend him: "Lee came back (from the campaign in West Virginia), carrying the weight of defeat, and unappreciated by the people whom he served; for they could not know, as I knew, that if his orders and plans had been carried out, the result would have been victory rather than defeat."

In addition to Jefferson Davis, one other man came to the

rescue. "General Lee," said Stonewall Jackson, "is a phenomenon. He is the only man I would follow blindfold."

For a while the storm of abuse had abated. The South had met with the dawning flush of victory. And then, another series of defeats, and the editors lashed themselves once more into a fury of vituperation. "The retreating General." "All we can see is his back." "Underground Lee, digger of entrenchments."

The battle of Gettysburg. Lee had ordered General Longstreet to take the initiative. "The enemy is here, and if we don't attack him, he will attack us—and whip us."

But Longstreet disobeyed the order. Instead of attacking, he sat like Achilles sulking in his tent. And then, when the battle was over and lost, he added insult to injury. He wrote an article to excuse his own mistake by "informing the public of eleven mistakes Lee made at Gettysburg."

And how did General Lee meet this "last unkindest" cut of all? In his report to President Davis about the loss of the battle, he wrote: "I find no fault with any one but myself."

## II

GENERAL LEE, the perfect cavalier. An iron-gray man on an iron-gray horse, firmness mounted on grace, the most chivalrous soldier in the South on the most thoroughbred horse in Virginia—Robert E. Lee and his Traveler.

Lincoln stood for integrity; Davis represented fortitude; Lee symbolized duty. When the Civil War broke out, Lincoln offered him the supreme command of the Union army. But Lee was a Virginian. He felt it his duty to stick by his state. He was ready, if necessary, to enlist as a private in the army of the South.

Yet he hated secession. "I can anticipate no greater calamity for this country," he wrote, "than the dissolution of the Union . . . Secession is nothing but revolution."

And he hated war. He dreaded to see the day on which "strife and civil war are to take the place of brotherly love." And when

the war came, he repeatedly expressed his horror at the unnecessary carnage. "My heart bleeds for the people," he wrote to his wife after one of his victorious battles. "You can have no idea how ghastly the sight of a battlefield is."

And, above all, he hated slavery. He condemned it in words that were almost as vehement as those of Abraham Lincoln. "Slavery as an institution," he said, "is a moral and political evil. I regard it as a greater evil for the whites than for the blacks." His attitude toward slavery went beyond the mere expression of his hatred for it. In 1861 he freed all the slaves that he owned himself, and in 1862 he freed all those that belonged to his wife.

Yet this lover of unity and freedom deliberately chose the side of disunity and slavery. "I shall draw the sword," he had said before the war, "only in defense of my home." It was only after long and heart-searching deliberation that he had decided upon this step. And he based his final decision upon his sense of honor, his duty, his integrity, his affection, and his faith in the word of God. Did not the Holy Scriptures point the way? There it was, the injunction of the Apostle Paul in his First Letter to Timothy: "But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

His allegiance to his home, his children, his invalid wife—this was the path of his duty. A path paved with tragedy, leading out of heartbreak house into a future of tears and blood.

He must repel the invader at all cost, yet with no rancor in his heart. He had nothing but words of sorrow for the soldiers on the other side. When he was retreating from Gettysburg, he chanced upon a wounded enemy. "I recognized him," wrote this wounded soldier later on, "and though faint from loss of blood, I raised my hands, looked Lee in the face, and shouted—'Hurrah for the Union!'"

"The general heard me, dismounted, and came toward me . . . I thought he meant to kill me . . . But he extended his

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS AMERICANS

hand to me, grasping mine firmly, and looking right into my eyes, said—"My son, I hope you will soon be well."

### III

TENDER to men, and to beasts. One day as he mounted his horse, Traveler, while taking leave of several ladies, one of them reached out to pluck a gray hair from the horse's mane. "I want it as a memento, General." Whereupon Lee took off his hat, bowed his gray head with a courteous smile, and said, "If you please, madam, I would prefer that you tear out one of my own hairs."

### IV

THE LEES were the aristocrats of the Southern aristocracy. On both sides of the family, Robert was the heir to some of the most illustrious of the Virginia councillors and governors. Two of the Lees had been among the signers of the Declaration of Independence. Another had served as the European fiscal agent of the Colonies during the Revolution. And it was Robert's father, "Light-Horse Harry Lee," who had coined that famous epigram about Washington, "First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen."

Yet the Lees were none too well off in the goods of the world. Theirs was an aristocracy of breeding rather than of wealth. Indeed, in 1807 the Lee family was decidedly on the ragged edge of prosperity; and when Robert came, on January 19, he was an unwanted child.

Robert lost his father when he was only eleven. Upon the competent shoulders of the little fellow descended the direction of the household and the care of his invalid mother. Every day, after school, he took his mother out for a drive. And he made it his special business to fasten the curtains in the carriage in order to protect his mother from the drafts. This sort of thoughtfulness was characteristic of him throughout his life

His mother had received as her wedding portion a sufficient fund to keep the wolf from the door and to give the children an adequate education. Following in the footsteps of his father, Robert decided upon a military career. He entered West Point at eighteen and graduated second in his class.

His mother lived just long enough to enjoy his graduation. Her unwanted child had become her favorite. Proudly she looked upon her handsome young lieutenant in his resplendent uniform, and then she closed her tired eyes.

Lee's first assignment was at Fortress Monroe, a station not far from Arlington Heights—and Mary Ann Custis. This prepossessing young lady was the only child of George Custis, the adopted son of George Washington. She had met Lee at a dance while he was still a cadet at West Point. They were married on June 30, 1831; and when George Custis died, the entire estate of Arlington passed into their hands. From that day on, poverty and Robert Lee were no longer on intimate terms.

Young as he was, Lee had already gained the reputation of being the most resourceful engineer in the American army. The Mississippi River was threatening the city of St. Louis. To save the city required a feat of unusual engineering skill. There was but one man in the army, said General Scott, who was equal to the task, and that man was Brevet Captain Lee. "He is young," reported the general, "but if the work can be done, he can do it."

Lee was appointed to the job, and he did it. He put "the Father of Waters into a strait jacket," diverted its course, and thus not only removed the danger of floods from St. Louis, but improved the navigation of the entire stretch of the Upper Mississippi.

His next job was in the Mexican War. Referring to his services in that war, General Scott declared that Lee was "the very best soldier I have ever seen in the field." In overcoming the passes of apparently impassable mountains, he displayed the resourcefulness of a Hannibal. Perhaps the most important feat in his Mexican campaign was his march, through a pelting tropical

storm, across the lava peaks of the Pedregal. General Henry J. Hunt, who had unsuccessfully attempted the same march, had this to say of Lee's achievement: "I would not believe that it could have been made, that passage of the Pedregal, if he had not made it." It was this maneuver of Captain Lee's that enabled the American army to occupy Mexico City and to end the war.

Yet Lee himself recalled an altogether different scene as the most memorable incident of the war—the scene of a little Mexican girl bending over a dying drummer boy. Of all the soldiers in history, Lee had the most unsoldierlike soul. Why a man of such gentle sympathies should have chosen a military career is one of God's unsolved mysteries.

Lee was not by nature a happy warrior. He loved his own family too well to take delight in breaking up other families. His thoughts were centered on saving and not on destroying. After the battle of Contreras he wrote to his son Custis, who was then at school: "I wondered when the musket balls and grape were whistling over my head in a perfect shower, where I could put you, if with me, to be safe." In the middle of another battle he picked up a bird that had fallen out of its nest and placed it behind a rock where it might be sheltered from the bullets. He found the fireside of his home more congenial to his nature than the campfire of the battlefield. Indeed, he hoped that after his Mexican campaign he would be able to spend the rest of his days with his family. "I pray that this shall be the last time"—he wrote to his wife from Mexico—"that I shall be absent from you in my life."

But the call of his duty would not let him rest. In 1859 he was ordered to put down the threatened rebellion of the slaves under John Brown. It was Colonel Lee who captured Brown and handed him over to justice. And in 1861, he followed the call of duty once more into the ranks of the invaded South. "Duty," he wrote in a letter to his eldest son, "is the sublimest word in our language."

## V

THE OUTCOME of the Civil War was decided even before the war began. From first to last, the South had about a million men on her muster rolls. The North had three million. The taxable property in the South was worth five billion dollars; in the North, eleven billion. The Southern navy was practically nonexistent; the Northern navy numbered almost two hundred thousand men. The South, in other words, was conquered by arithmetic. And it was only the military genius of Lee that kept the unequal contest in the balance for four years.

There are those who think that Lee might have even won the war if Stonewall Jackson, the ablest and bravest of his lieutenants, had not been killed at Chancellorsville. But let the poets and the novelists deal with the problems of the historical might-have-beens. To the scientific historian the ultimate defeat of General Lee was as inevitable as the destruction of a glass ball coming into collision with a cannon ball.

Yet the resiliency of Lee's army was one of the amazing miracles in history. He met the superior forces of Pope, of McClellan, of Burnside, of Hooker, and in every case he rebounded with new energy and with new determination. The North had adopted a policy of "attrition"—that is, an endless and relentless slaughter of both sides in the expectation that the side having the lesser number of men would be the first to become exhausted. And yet in the face of this obvious fact, Lee dared again and again to take the offensive. And in these tactics there was more of method than of madness. For Lee generally managed to maneuver his army into the more advantageous position and, in this way, he lost considerably fewer men than his opponents.

Following these tactics, he pushed the bewildered Union generals from one dangerous position into another. He routed them at Manassas; he swept them away from Richmond; he even planned to march upon Washington. But his plan was frustrated

by one of those insignificant instances that produce some of the most significant events in history. One of Lee's officers, in gathering up his effects as he was moving from one camp into another, forgot a single trifling item—a package of cigars wrapped in a piece of paper. But this wrapping paper happened to be a copy of Lee's plan for the capture of Washington. It fell into the hand of a Union officer, who promptly turned it over to McClellan. And thus Washington was saved from Lee's invasion by a handful of cigars.

But Lee's soldiers were not discouraged. "Uncle Robert will get us into Washington yet," they cried. "You bet he will!" For he was their idol. Unaware of the tremendous odds against him, they hadn't the slightest suspicion of ultimate failure. Not with Uncle Robert at their head. Hadn't General Scott himself admitted that Lee was worth an entire army? How, then, could the North expect to win, with two armies arrayed against it?

And so they cheered Uncle Robert, and sang "Maryland, My Maryland," and marched hopefully into the fields of Antietam—forty thousand men against eighty-seven thousand.

It was the deadliest battle of the war. The plain of Antietam became transformed into a gigantic altar—an altar of flame, on which twenty-five thousand lives were offered up.

The military tacticians called it a drawn battle. But it was not. Antietam was a severe blow to the Southern cause. It ended Lee's first offensive against the North. It placed Maryland definitely out of the Confederacy and on the side of the Union. And, most important of all, it gave Lincoln the psychological moment for the Emancipation Proclamation.

But Lee was not defeated. Not yet. At Fredericksburg he beat off a host of a hundred and thirteen thousand men with an ill-fed, ill-shod, and ill-armed force of seventy-eight thousand. At Chancellorsville, with sixty-two thousand men, he outflanked an array of one hundred and twenty thousand and "rolled them up like a scroll." And then, with a daring that far overbalanced his strength, he entered upon a second invasion of the North.



## VI

LEE WAS an excellent strategist, but a poor aggressor. He lacked the beastliness necessary to a successful commander. He was too human for the inhumanity of war. He played the game according to the rules; and this, from a military standpoint, was a fatal error. He fought only against men, and not against women and children. General Sherman, on the other hand, was more realistic. He understood war for what it was—a relentless struggle to crush the enemy at whatever cost. Everything to him was fair in war. Every weapon that could prostrate the enemy was, in his eyes, a legitimate weapon. To win a war, he maintained, you must kill the men and terrify the women and starve the children. Fighting against women and children is ungallant and savage, to be sure. But war—Sherman was frank enough to insist—is murder; and it is ridiculous to talk of committing murder in a gallant and gentlemanly manner. Lee was mentally and morally attuned to peace. Sherman was logically and psychologically attuned to war. When Lee invaded the North, he ordered his troops to refrain from “barbarous outrages against the innocent and the defenceless.” His soldiers, he demanded, must “fight like Christian gentlemen.” What a naïve demand! As if there could be anything in common between the gentleness of Christianity and the savagery of war! Sherman knew better than that. “War is hell,” he asserted, and then he proceeded to make his assertion true. When he marched into Georgia, he wrote coldly, “I would not restrain the army, lest its vigor and energy should be impaired.” And to the commander of one of his divisions he sent the all-inclusive order “to spare nothing.”

Lee, if the truth must be told, didn’t have his heart in the war. He “pulled” his punches, because he was temperamentally not a fighter. Sherman, by contrast, was a two-fisted killer. In his march to the sea, he cut a swath of devastation sixty miles wide.

He "swept the country clean" with as much thoroughness and with as little regard for human suffering as a prairie fire.

And so at last the strength of the South gave out. It was a pitiable but courageous defeat. "What will history say of our surrender?" asked one of Lee's staff officers in a passion of grief.

"Yes," replied Lee. "I know they will say hard things of us . . . But at least we are conscious that we have humbly tried to do our duty."

## VII

AFTER HIS SURRENDER, Lee mounted his horse and rode away. But not to his home. His home had been burned down by the Union soldiers. There was sadness in his heart, but no bitterness. One Sunday at church he heard a preacher scathingly denounce the North. "Doctor," he said after the sermon, "I remember to have read in the Good Book that we must love our enemies."

"These words from you?" exclaimed the astonished preacher.

"Yes, Doctor. I have fought against the Union soldiers, but I have never cherished any vindictive feelings . . . I have never seen the day when I did not pray for them."

Yet the North neither prayed nor cherished any friendly feeling for Lee. At the order of President Johnson, he was disfranchised.

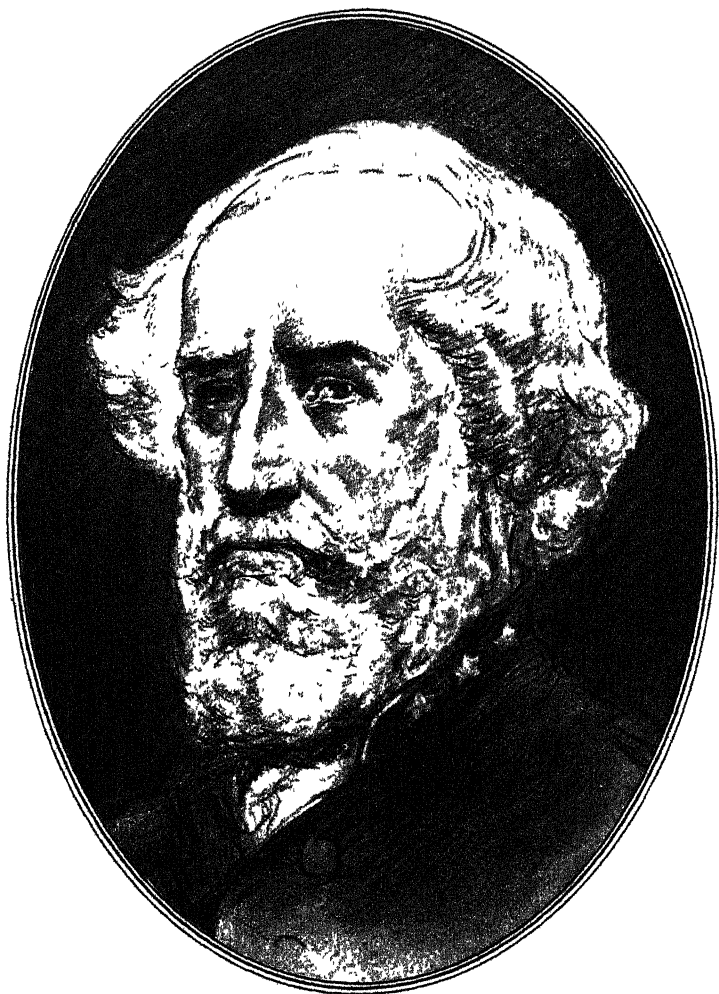
A man without a country. But even then there was in the soul of General Lee no surrender to despair. "Human virtue," he had once remarked, "ought to be equal to human calamity." And strangely enough, it was after all his defeats and his sufferings that he found his true virtue, his real vocation. He was appointed President of Washington College, in Virginia, and there at last he enjoyed the satisfaction of a fulfilled life. For, in the final analysis, his genius was not military but inspirational. With all his greatness as a tactician, he was a misfit on the battlefield. He never was quite in his element when he led men to their death. He felt much more at home when he taught them how to live.

To live as brothers in a common country for a common cause. "Madam," he said to the mother of one of his students when she spoke disparagingly of the North, "don't bring up your sons to detest the United States. Remember that we form one country now. Let us abandon all these local animosities, and *make our sons Americans.*"





*Stephen C. Foster*



*Robert E. Lee*

EDWIN BOOTH

*Important Dates in the Life of Edwin Booth*

- |   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1833—Born, Maryland.  | 1866—Returned to stage.            |
| 1849—Made first stage appearance in Boston.                 | 1869—Married Mary McVicker.        |
| 1851—Took leading part in Richard III.                      | Built Booth's Theater in New York. |
| 1855—Toured Australia.                                      | 1873—Became bankrupt.              |
| 1857—Scored brilliant success as Sir Giles Overreach.       | 1874-82—Recovered fortune.         |
| 1860—Married Mary Devlin.                                   | 1890—Toured with Helena Modjeska.  |
| 1861—Scored success in England.                             | 1891—Retired to Players' Club.     |
| 1863—Wife died.   | 1893—Died, New York.               |
| 1865—Retired after assassination of Lincoln by his brother. |                                    |



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# Edwin Booth

1833-1893

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**B**EFORE THE CURTAIN rose on Edwin Booth's life, tragedy had set the stage for him—marking him for her own and delivering him into the earthly keeping of a family of actors. For guide and teacher, she chose a half-mad, alcoholic father; for background, the dim, musty theaters of small towns, always smelling of grease paint and decay. Cheap hotels and boarding houses, where dust and neglect hung like a pall, stifled the unfortunate occupant. From the erratic father he inherited the genius with which he was to translate into art his sufferings, moving half the world to tears. He was given a philosophical mind, humor, and a warm heart for weapons to withstand the buffetings that fate had written into his role. In addition he possessed bodily grace, a face that once looked upon could never be forgotten, a personality that dominated any group, and a carriage that under every circumstance remained noble. Against such a backdrop it could not have been otherwise than that he should become one of the greatest tragedians the stage has ever known.

Edwin was a normal boy, as far as was possible under the strange circumstances of his childhood and youth. Tall and slender, he had the average boy's love for mischief and adven-

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS AMERICANS

ture. Serious and thoughtful, he yet possessed an impish sense of humor. His active imagination could invest the most sordid scene with glamor. The great dark eyes, that kindled so quickly to flame, or smoldered in thought, caused strangers to pause and look. For even in childhood Edwin had an air. He was a personage; and where he led, others followed. Edwin Booth *was* each Shakespearean character he so peerlessly portrayed—with something vibrant added. A sad Puck—an impish Hamlet.

Edwin's early days were spent in, and around, the theater. He knew no other life. His first assignment was that of dresser and caretaker to his irresponsible father. Being duenna to a hard drinking, violent man was no enviable task. The constant vigilance necessary to keep him in condition for his appearances left little time for Edwin to indulge in social pastimes. As they barnstormed through mining camps and out of the way towns, it was Edwin's lot to pilot the sodden star from hotel to bar to theater, seeing to it that "the one too many" was not imbibed until after the last curtain had descended. Not yet in his teens, Edwin was often forced to pit his will against that of the bacchanalian Junius. And it was the frail boy who most often won.

There were times when the Booth fortunes would not permit of residence in hotels. Then the citizens of whatever town they were playing would witness a strange sight—a slender boy escorting a husky man along his staggering way, and by his very strength of will power exacting obedience. On one such occasion the Booths were occupying inconvenient quarters over a stable. A draughty, evil-smelling place, where rotted boards gave way beneath the feet, and restless winds moaned and rattled about the ramshackle edifice. The ammoniac smells, Junius declared, were beneficial to the health. And a little hardship, beneficial to the spirit. But midnight saw Junius slipping out to the nearest bar, in search of different smells, and potions more lifting, if less beneficial, to the spirit. He found his way blocked by a determined young Edwin.

"You shan't leave, father," Edwin said.

## EDWIN BOOTH

"I can't stay here, son, I'm choking." Junius made eloquent pantomime that would have moved the coldest audience, but not Edwin.

"You shan't go, father." Edwin's mouth was firm, his eye cold. Father and son stared at each other, equal determination written on each face. It was the father who weakened. Assuming his grandest manner as a defense, he strode to a closet, locking himself in. For hours the boy pleaded with him to come out, to no avail. Finally, Edwin decided to go for help, fearful that the old man might suffocate. The door was thrown open with a bang, and Junius emerged to stare once more at his son—this time in puzzlement. Then, docile as a kitten, he disrobed and went quietly to bed.

## II

EDWIN NEVER *entered* the theater, he inherited it. It was *Richard III* that first saw him stalk the boards. A fateful drama for young Edwin, for this play was once again in later life to prove the backdrop for a stirring event. Edwin's maiden appearance was quite by accident. In those helter-skelter days, before Actors' Equity and theatrical unions, one man often played many parts. And so it was with the prompter for the small company at the Boston Museum (1849). The overworked actor-prompter had grown rebellious. Turning to Edwin, he said: "You play Tressell, it's too much for one man to do." Edwin was willing; he knew the part, as indeed he knew almost every line of every drama he had witnessed. Father Junius, too, was willing; it was time young Edwin began to think of a career other than that of nursemaid. He heard the boy through his lines, nodded his approval, and found him a costume that would fit.

"But your spurs, son. Where are your spurs?"

Edwin looked abashed.

"Here, take mine, then," Junius ordered. And with a flourish the great star handed to his son a pair of spurs. Did he know he

was passing on the torch, and that it would be carried gallantly aloft through half a century?

Edwin's performance went without hitch. Junius Booth that night made a gesture, dramatic and touching. Putting Edwin to bed, he fed him with the gruel that he, Junius, was used to receiving from his son's hand. And around the boy's head he tucked his own worsted nightcap. A greater tribute than any words he might have uttered. Edwin had become a permanent member of the troupe.

Edwin's acquaintances were all of the theater, and Edwin was their acknowledged leader. They went their merry, madcap way over a continent, and it was Edwin who turned whatever hardships they endured into a game. When no hotel space was available, and all the younger men of the company camped in a field, it was Edwin who led them, with a whoop, to round up burros and ride them, shouting and startling the inhabitants, through the streets to the theater. Meals were prepared over a campfire, gypsy fashion. All the members of the company took turns at the task, all except Edwin. "It's a poor company that can't support one gentleman," he declared loftily. And though he stuck to his decision to do no work, it was he who turned the event into a glorious adventure. Clowning and jesting, he kept the group in a continuous uproar.

Thus far Edwin had not really acted—not, that is, as he could. It was an impulse as sudden as his other pranks that first brought Edwin's genius before the public. Several acts of *The Marble Heart* had unfolded themselves before a thrilled audience when Edwin turned to his associates backstage, just before his entrance. "Do you want to see some real acting?" he asked. "Then watch!" And taking his cue, Edwin Booth played a scene which made theater history. With such pathos and passion as had never been witnessed by the troupe, real tears streaming down his cheeks, he gave a performance which left not a dry eye in the theater. And, greater tribute still, not a dry eye backstage among his fellow thespians. "How's that?" he asked, when the scene was fin-

ished. And he winked slyly at his companions. Another prank of Edwin's, he tried to pass it off as such—but without success. The seriousness of the occasion was mirrored in their faces. The genius that had so long lain dormant was awakened, the tragedian had emerged, and never again would Edwin be merely a competent player. He had loosed a flood that was to carry him relentlessly forward, to fame, fortune, and heartbreak.

### III

EDWIN MARRIED Mary Devlin, whom he called an angel. And certainly she possessed a good measure of angelic qualities—gentleness and loyalty and love, and an infinite patience. By Edwin's own words there was much to try that patience. Though he was devoted, he lacked those attributes which make a desirable husband. He was accustomed to wandering the highways. His sense of time and place were almost nonexistent. He loved his home passionately, but a vagabond life had unfitted him for domestic routine. And as his fortunes progressed, so did his need for strong potions. At the height of his career, without an equal in America, Edwin's thirst—probably inherited from his father—grew. The seething passions within him required the sedative of alcohol. But Mary never complained. When anyone else did so, Mary was quick to leap to his defense.

Edwin had reached the pinnacle of his profession in America. And he longed to conquer England. He knew well the difficulties of such an undertaking. The English did not look kindly on America, and their own Irving was securely enthroned in their hearts. But Edwin must go. Taking with him the delicate Mary, he went to beard the British lion in his den. His reception in London was lukewarm. "The critics damn me with faint praise," he said. Then, as many before and after him, Edwin turned to the Provinces, and there found hearty acclaim. And, warmed by this appreciation, Edwin gave measure for measure.

From this tour Edwin rushed back to London, spurred by

great news. Mary had presented him with a daughter, whom they named Edwina. There was wild rejoicing in the Booth home. But when the first flush of rapture had spent itself, a cloud descended on the small ménage. Mary was very ill. Torn between sorrow for his wife's poor health and gladness over the tiny infant, Edwin bade farewell to England. Maybe back in America a cure might be found for Mary.

In America the prodigal found calves fattened to the bursting. Triumph succeeded triumph. Edwin's cup was full. But at the bottom of that cup lay gall and wormwood. Mary's health failed steadily. She grew weaker, no medical treatment helped. But she smiled bravely from her couch, speeding Edwin on his triumphant way.

Once again Edwin played that drama slated for a role in his private life—*Richard III*. The triumphs were empty. Within him gnawed the thought of his beloved Mary's suffering. To still that bitterness, Edwin had drunk freely, much too freely. Emerging from the stage into the dusty wings, Edwin was handed a telegram. His eyes searched the words without grasping their meaning, then focused themselves. Mary was dead. Just two years after their marriage. With a moan Edwin collapsed against the wall, sobered immediately by the appalling news.

So great was Edwin's grief over Mary's death, that he found it impossible to continue acting, and retired temporarily from the stage. So deep was his remorse for the unhappiness he had caused Mary through his drinking, that he foreswore all alcoholic indulgence. Edwin was sick—not only in body, but in mind. In letters to his friends, Dick and Elizabeth Stoddard, he poured out the remorse that tore him spiritually asunder. Seeking solace in mysticism, he embraced the idea of reincarnation. He felt that Mary was surely in some realm where those who had suffered, and lived so blamelessly, must at last have found peace. He prayed that all the grief he might have caused her would be compensated for in that world.

Everything upon which his sick mind touched became tainted, so that even his profession had turned into a loathsome occupation. He agreed now with his father who had once advised him to become an obscure farmer or cabinet maker, rather than "the most distinguished man on earth." To Dick Stoddard he voiced his bitter loathing. "I wish to God, Dick, I was not an actor. I despise and dread the damned occupation. All its charms are gone, and the stupid reality stands naked before me. I am a monkey, nothing more."

For weeks Edwin shut himself away from the world, by turns brooding and castigating himself. Through his prolonged fits of melancholy he alienated his two closest friends, the Stoddards. This loss was the one burden too many; he could not bear it. Edwin plunged further into the depths, wallowing in such a slough of despond that even his cook, the last to remain with him, could not tolerate his morose brooding. When she left, Edwin was in complete isolation.

## IV

IN TIME the tides of despair rolled over and away. Edwin returned to himself, and resumed his acting. Grief had given greater power to his art; and bereavement, greater depth to his capacity for friendship. The public welcomed back their idol, paying highest tribute to his genius. He was thankful to throw himself into his work, which afforded him some slight surcease from his unhappiness, but never quite filled the hollow left by Mary's death.

Whether because of the immensity of his own emotions, or whether he carried violence within himself, Edwin, always gentle, attracted violence.

Having ploughed his way painfully out of his suffering to a haven of peace, Edwin was not long to retain it. His visits to Mount Auburn, Mary's grave, had become a pilgrimage from which he had returned spiritually refreshed. Moved by the beauty

of the scene, and certain that Mary was happier than ever he had been able to make her, he gave his public joyfully of the best he had. His one-hundredth performance of Hamlet was celebrated with a heartwarming ovation. Blustering March, the roaring lion, and all was serenity in Edwin's life again. And then came the month of soft showers and warm sun with its promise of further warmth and fulfillment. But not to Edwin. April brought him a shock which even in normal circumstances he could hardly have withstood, and which after his recent trials proved too much for him.

Edwin was never greatly interested in politics. Only once had he availed himself of his right to vote. And then he had done so because the Presidential candidate was, in his eyes, a man of such extraordinary merit and such selfless idealism that Edwin took his election to heart and rejoiced in his victory. President Abraham Lincoln. When the news reached Edwin that his favorite brother, John Wilkes Booth, had assassinated his beloved President, Edwin's emotions went through stunned shock, to grief and outrage. Never again as long as he lived would Edwin utter his brother's name, nor permit anyone else to do so in his presence. The public's horror at the act rose to such heights that it included the whole of the acting profession in its wrath. And Edwin, whose shock was so great that he once more retired from the stage, was subjected to abusive letters and threats upon his life. Many anonymous correspondents accused him of complicity in the outrage.

Years later a trunkful of John's costumes was delivered to Edwin in New York. John had shipped it to Canada, evidently intending to make his escape there after he had perpetrated the slaying. In the dead of night Edwin, with the property man to assist him, went to the furnace room of the theater over which Edwin was then living. Opening the trunk, Edwin handed one article after another to the man, indicating that he burn them. Over several costumes, whose beauty of fabric and workmanship made the burning a painful task, the assistant hesitated. Edwin



pointed at the furnace, pain clouding his eyes. "Burn them!" he commanded.

Over one costume Edwin spent much time. Sitting on the trunk he fondled it lovingly, tears in his eyes. "It was my father's, Garrie. He wore it in *Richard III*, the first night I played Tressell. It was in Boston, at the Museum."

"Don't you think you should keep just that one, Mr. Booth?" his companion asked.

"No. Burn it," Edwin said. He held the costume away from him, as though loath to be contaminated by a garment that had touched the flesh of Lincoln's slayer. The operation had taken many hours. It was six o'clock of a stormy morning when they finished. Edwin straightened himself, gave a deep sigh, and then, nodding to his assistant, bade him good morning and returned to his interrupted sleep.

Once more time healed the outer aspect of his spiritual wound. But forever after Edwin bled inwardly. One ray of sunshine had entered his life at that period. Dick Stoddard had broken his long silence to write to his old friend. Edwin opened the envelope with trembling hands. It was a letter full of sympathy and condolence, but the closing paragraph dashed to earth all Edwin's hopes for reconciliation. "Your once friend, never enemy, *Farewell*," Dick had written.

It was not enough for Edwin to refuse utterance to his brother's name, to burn every costume he had ever worn. He vowed never to set foot in Washington, where John had committed the crime. To all offers and inducements to come to that city, he turned a deaf ear. His mouth was so firmly set in bitter silence that his associates grew fearful when mention of that city was made before him.

## V

IN 1868 the cornerstone of Booth's theater was laid. In February of the next year the doors were opened to the public. Mary

McVickers was his leading lady, playing Juliet to his Romeo. The following June Mary became the second Mrs. Booth, and from that time forward until her death played Xantippe to his Socrates. From the first moment of their marriage it was apparent that Mary was not balanced mentally, and that time would not improve her condition. Mary's unbalance manifested itself most violently in jealousy and in persecution of Edwin. So unreasonable was she in her jealous rages, that she refused to allow Edwin to be attended by his usual dresser. She insisted on performing that task herself, that no one might be near him. Edwin's only escape was on the stage. Mary waited for him in the wings, watching; and on Edwin's exits she was ready with her vicious tirade. Mary's jealousy included even Edwina, whose life she made unbearable with petty persecution in Edwin's absence.

The first season of the new theater was a brilliant success. But in the second, Edwin was forced to admit that business was not his *métier*. The venture went steadily into the red, and Edwin took once more to barnstorming. For three years he toured the states, and the fabulous sums he earned were poured into the ever widening maw of the hungry theater. Tired and discouraged, Edwin withdrew from the management of the theater; but his successor met with little more success. A year after the change, Edwin went through bankruptcy.

Once more he ventured to England. He found great satisfaction in playing, this time, with Irving, and would have liked to remain. But several events were to cut short his stay. England, on this second appearance, gave him a secure place in her esteem. But Mary was growing worse. Added to her mental instability, Mary had developed consumption of the lungs and throat. Edwin's gentleness led him to refer to his wife in kind phrases. "Poor Mary was never right," he said. "Her brain was too great for her fragile body, and both are now wearing out. The end is near." Of his departure from England he spoke wistfully. "As

fate will have it, I must leave in the midst of my success, to be forgotten, I presume, in a few months. But it does not make me miserable; my life has been so full of ups and downs that I calmly accept any rise or fall that may occur."

On Edwin's return, he was released from bankruptcy—an event that lifted a heavy burden from his mind. He had labored valiantly under the burden, worrying much about the indebtedness. He breathed more freely now, ready to turn with a lighter heart to a southern tour, with one less cloud obscuring the horizon. The tour, however, was postponed. Thrown from his carriage, Edwin had suffered serious injuries. For many weeks he was forced to stay in bed, chafing at the inactivity. At last, able once more to travel, Edwin set gayly forth for the South and California. It had been a long time since he had seen California, and he looked forward expectantly to renewing acquaintanceships and to revisiting the scenes of his youth. Well off now, he was amused to see himself courted by those very people who had avoided him in the days of his struggles. He received letters from strangers who claimed that he owed them money. To Lawrence Barrett, his manager, he said: "I have notes from impecunious old girls who vow I used to live with them. Dissolute wretch! But mark me, Norbert, they be board-*ing* (not dy) housekeepers, and may have unsettled scores foreninst me!"

In New Orleans he was disturbed, also amused, by the proximity of the theater to a *Maison de Joie*. While rehearsing, he was conscious of an obligato of frothy tunes and coy conversation. To Barrett he enacted the results of the strange medley, which went in this fashion: "I'll catch the conscience of the King—For he's a jolly good fellow." Sin, and sublimity, and rain. It poured steadily; and with his usual humor, Edwin voiced his wonder as to whether the heavens wept in grief over his presence, or whether the spirit of the great Shakespeare shed tears over the theatrical crimes committed in his name.

Again violence singled out Edwin as a target, for no other

reason than that he was a prominent figure. Playing *Richard II*, Edwin stood calm and unperturbed as a bullet whistled past him, barely missing his head. The whole audience was thrown into panic. Calmly he pointed to the balcony where the would-be assassin stood, nor did he flinch or miss a line as the second bullet sped past him. Unruffled, Edwin retired to the wings until the commotion had abated, and the man was led away by the police. He then returned to the stage and finished his performance. His enemy, upon examination, admitted he had no grudge whatsoever against Edwin, and spent his remaining days in an asylum writing Edwin for help.

## VI

EDWIN, who nightly appeared before thousands, suffered stage fright when making his appearance before a group gathered to do him homage. The Booth festival in his honor filled him with misgivings. To Lawrence Barrett he said: "June fifteenth is the date of the *execution* . . . I wish the sentence could be somehow commuted—to something I could endure more stoically; but, alas! I fear I'm in for it." The festival was a brilliant success, and Edwin's stoicism was more than convivial. He said afterward to Barrett: "Wasn't it jolly, and grand? Everyone was quite *limber*. I myself was quite so!"

While all outside was praise and friendship for Edwin, in his home he met only nagging and recrimination. To Mary, Edwin was always gentle and thoughtful. When he spoke of her, only the kindest phrases passed his lips, nor would he let others speak of her otherwise. But Mary's weak mind had twisted all Edwin's actions into ugliness, until in her thoughts he assumed the shape of a demon, ready to do her constant ill. Not content with berating him herself, Mary had spent years in writing to her family, and to all others who would listen, about his imagined brutalities. Even in death she pursued him. At her funeral he was forced to listen while a misinformed clergyman eulogized the dead

woman and chastised Edwin verbally for his supposed mistreatment of her. Nor was this all. Newspapers, goaded by Mary's family, hurled scurrilous attacks against him. All this Edwin bore with dignity, forbearing any retort that might besmirch the name of the woman he had so tenderly protected while she lived.

With this shadow lifted from his life, Edwin set sail for Europe, taking Edwina with him. He had long wanted to rove the highways and byways of the world. The two enjoyed themselves hugely. His gift for recreating on paper the accents and idioms he encountered made his letters delightful reading. He wrote to Davy of their German guide who, when the hotel was too full to provide him with a room, suggested to a maid that she "but zum skreams," around her bed, while he in the other bed lay "kerviet as a shile."

Edwin's gay spirits overflowed into doggerel, of which he sent pages to Davy. At Bingen, he composed verses for that town which Davy had always so highly praised.

*It's praise I've heard you singin', with many a tipsy tear,  
But Dave, I'm disappointed in all except its beer.*

After the gay holiday, Edwin played in Germany and Vienna. The people liked him, and were eager to let him know. When Edwin returned to America, news of his triumphs had reached her shores ahead of him. Edwin was modest, speaking little of his success. "Yes, they heaped me with laurel wreaths," he confessed, "but all the men wanted to kiss me."

Edwin joined forces with Salvini. Together they made a wonderful team. But Edwin's physique was beginning to weaken under the long strain. He was suffering from vertigo. Several times while on the stage, Edwin staggered and fell. Newspapers and public, always quick to disparage actors, sent up the cry of drunkenness.

But Edwin went doggedly on. With Madame Modjeska he toured the states, and found playing opposite the great lady an inspiration. The tour was cut short in Rochester, where Edwin

suffered a paralytic stroke. An entr'acte, the author giving warning that a colorful drama was drawing toward its climax. He recovered sufficiently to act once more, and to found the Players' Club at Gramercy Park in New York.

Edwin had earned fabulous sums, and had spent them all. Much of his wealth had gone toward helping friends in trouble. For this generosity he would accept no thanks, nor would he allow his beneficiaries to make known his gifts. Once, as Edwin was leaving the Players' Club in gay company, an old actor rushed to him and with tears in his eyes kissed his hands. All the while he was muttering words which Edwin saw to it were not heard by his companions. "The poor old thing has had a hard time until lately," remarked one of the company, after Edwin had sped him away, "but now he seems to have had a windfall." "Yes," Edwin replied, "the old dear is provided for, thank heaven." It was not until after Edwin's death that those present learned the truth: Edwin's own money had bought the man a small annuity.

Once again, March and April were to witness stirring events in Edwin's life. In March (1891) his business and acting partner, Lawrence Barrett, collapsed during a performance of *Richelieu*, and two days later he died. Edwin strove valiantly to keep going alone; but feeble himself, he could not carry on. In April he played a farewell performance in *Hamlet*, and shortly afterward succumbed to nervous prostration. Living now at the Players' Club, Edwin lingered on for two years. He was not without good company, for all who knew him flocked to his bedside. But Edwin was through with living, was indeed welcoming death who, he said, "gives us a life more healthful and enduring than all the physicians, temporal or spiritual, can give."

The Eternal Author had prepared a climax fitting to the drama that was Edwin's life. At the Players' Club he lay, between periods of coma and consciousness. It was "now that very witching hour," that Edwin had so often recited in his most famous role, *Hamlet*. About his bedside were assembled close friends.

## EDWIN BOOTH

Outside raged a wild electric storm. Rain and wind pounded against the window. Lightning slashed the angry skies. At exactly twelve o'clock, every light in the Players' Club mysteriously went out. A few seconds of utter darkness, and when the lights went on again, Edwin Booth was no more.





## BUFFALO BILL

*Important Dates in the Life of Buffalo Bill*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1846—Born, Scott County, Iowa.                         | 1880—Began to organize Wild West Show.     |
| 1856—Father stabbed for advocating abolition.          | 1887—Toured Europe.                        |
| 1868-69—Appointed chief of Scouts by General Sheridan. | 1888—Wrote Story of the Wild West.         |
| 1872—Elected to Nebraska Legislature.                  | 1901—Established Cody Military College.    |
| 1876—Killed Chief Yellow Hand in Sioux War.            | 1904—Wrote The Adventures of Buffalo Bill. |
|  | 1917—Died, Denver, Colorado.               |

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# William Frederick Cody

## (Buffalo Bill)

1846—1917

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FROM A crystal ball, a gaudily draped fortune teller raised her eyes to Elizabeth Ann Leacock. "You will marry a man that you will meet on the boat going home," she said, "and your son will be President of the United States." On the boat which bore her homeward, Eliza Ann met Isaac Cody and shortly thereafter married him. When a son was born to them—they named him William Frederick Cody—Eliza harbored no doubts as to his future. But William Frederick had other ideas.

As the youngest rider and Indian fighter on the plains, Will early distinguished himself for courage and endurance; having tasted applause, Will meant to continue the feast. Only once, when he was ten, did Will subscribe to his mother's ambition for him. Having, with a neighbor's son, tapped a barrel of hard cider, he was brought home in the neighbor's wagon, quite drunk. At the scolding of his parents, Will roused himself sufficiently to remind them of his destiny. "Don't forget I am to be President," he said haughtily, and collapsed once more.

"He never touched hard cider again," said his sister Eliza, smugly.

No, not hard cider—but Will did justice to other hard liquors

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS AMERICANS

throughout his life; and his bouts of remorse were as gigantic as his thirst.

Will took kindly to the roistering frontier life of Kansas; and though tragedy twice struck the Cody family, he accepted it as part of the business of living. Before Will's eyes, his brother was thrown from his mount and killed; from that day on, Will respected horses. While delivering an abolitionist speech, father Isaac was stabbed in the back. Although the stabbing was not immediately fatal, Isaac suffered continually from the wound, and finally died of it. Will forever after hated secessionists, and nursed in his heart a spirit of vengeance.

A wild, adventurous spirit. He did not take kindly to academic studies. He remained in school long enough to learn his alphabet, then deserted the classroom for the larger school of field and forest. Since there were no truant officers to track down delinquents, Will followed his own inclinations unhampered. Haunting wag-  
oners' trails, and listening to Indian scouts as they spun their yarns by the light of campfires, he eagerly absorbed all the tall tales that he heard. In one of the camps Will met a cousin of the Codys, an accomplished rider. From him he learned all the tricks of horsemanship, adding a few flourishes of his own. This accomplishment received its due reward—an appointment as messenger for the biggest freighting company that plied the plains between Kansas and Utah. It was an exciting job. The long wagon trains were in constant danger—first from Indian attacks, and then from belligerent Mormons who were in open rebellion against the government.

When Will returned to collect his wages—he was thirteen, and drawing a man's pay—he signed for the money by making a mark in the presence of his mother. Seeing in Eliza's eyes tears of humiliation, Will promised to learn to write his name. He kept his promise and attended school for ten weeks—a period in which he learned not only to sign his name, but to write a letter after a fashion. His spelling was an individual system of phonetics, a code known only to Cody.

## BUFFALO BILL

### II

"THAT WAS the longest period of schooling I ever had," Bill often boasted. His formal education over, his restlessness carried him far afield once more. Succumbing to the gold fever that was sweeping the country, Will joined the mad rush to Denver. Two months of gold hunting wore out his enthusiasm, and Will went home, at his mother's request, to assist her in running a hotel she had bought. The gold rush had dulled the edge of many an adventurer's restlessness. On the headlong dash toward Colorado the wagons had borne the slogan, "Pike's Peak or Bust." On the return trip, the same wagons bore the graphic announcement, "Busted by Gosh."

Will endeavored to settle down and to be of help to his mother. Isaac Cody was dead. Eliza, weak with consumption, strove to earn a livelihood for herself and her daughters in the hotel. Moved by a deep love for his mother and his sisters, Will threw himself heart and soul into the project and became a tremendous asset—socially. Financially, he turned out to be a liability. The hotel was always crowded to capacity with Will's admirers, who ate and drank all the provisions that Eliza could gather. Will reveled in the role of host, but he had no talent for collecting bills. The hotel plunged steadily toward bankruptcy. Convinced that her son was more of a help away from home, Eliza released him to the life he loved best. Waving a gay farewell to his family, Will swung into the saddle, and was off to join the Pony Express. In that profession he quickly earned a reputation for being a fast and fearless rider in a company whose skill and courage had made history.

In his wanderings, Will had met Wild Bill Hickok, whose prowess with two guns was nationally famous. Will had long admired the adventurer from afar; at their first meeting that admiration turned into hero worship. Having once crossed, their

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS AMERICANS

paths were to recross again and again. They shared many an exciting venture, remaining fast friends until Wild Bill's death.

On one occasion they stalked a band of Indians who had stolen horses from the white settlers. They entered the fray with zest, as the continual raids from the Indians had thrown them both out of work. Wild Bill was unable to drive his stage coach, and the Pony Express had been suspended. Catching up with the thieves, they found themselves hopelessly outnumbered. But, loath to admit defeat, they decided to try a stampede. At nightfall they put their plan into action. Completely surprised, the Indians were thrown into confusion. The rescuers captured not only the stolen animals, but many of the horses belonging to the Indians as well.

In the meantime, rumors of war had reached the West; and, like every red-blooded youth, Will wanted to enlist in the army. But, yielding to his mother's request, he refrained. Instead, he joined the group of Northern irregulars known as the "Jayhawkers."

Will threw himself with relish into the new adventure. He still hated the secessionists bitterly; molesting them brought satisfaction to his thirst for vengeance. Eliza protested that Jayhawking was dirty work, and implored Will not to be mixed up in it. His reply was: "The secesh have hounded father to his death. I've got a right to make them miserable."

When the burning and the pillaging of the Jayhawkers had reached an excessive stage, the government stepped in and put an end to their activities. Will joined the Red-Legs—a group of guerrilla fighters, but more orderly than the Jayhawks and entirely legal. Eliza's death brought this activity to a close. Will was now eighteen and free of his promise to his mother not to join the regular army. He prepared himself for enlistment in a unique manner. For two months he caroused in Leavenworth, leading a dissolute and reckless life with gamblers, drunkards and bad characters generally. "I was fast becoming a hard case," he boasted.

## BUFFALO BILL

### III

IN 1864 William Frederick Cody enlisted as a private in the Union Army. The Kansas Seventh, of which he was a member, saw little action. Will spent his days largely in scouting and in spying expeditions. In Confederate gray he penetrated behind the enemy lines. Here once again his path crossed that of Wild Bill, who was acting in the same capacity. They regaled each other with many a tale of their exploits—highly embroidered for each other's amusement.

While on detached duty in St. Louis, Will met and fell in love with Louisa Frederici. The courtship was interrupted by Will's call to duty elsewhere. An ominous beginning to their romance. Their married life was to prove one long series of separations and reconciliations.

The war ended, Will was duly mustered out and quickly won Louisa's consent to their marriage. But first he must earn the funds necessary to the establishment of a family. Will turned to the work he knew and loved best—the handling of horses.

New days and new ways. The railroads were now forging westward, the clang of hammer on steel sounding the death knell of the stageline. In the company's safe, Will's wages were piling up—a tidy sum. Owing to the danger from highwaymen and Indians, drivers earned exorbitant wages. A feathered nest for Will's future family.

In the spring he got a letter from Louisa, urging him to give up the wild life and to settle down as he had promised. One month after his twentieth birthday (1866), Will and Louisa were married. He kept his promise and settled down—not, however, in a civilized town, as Louisa had hoped, but on the frontier at Salt Creek Valley. There he bought a hotel once owned by his mother; and for a second time he demonstrated his extraordinary ability to run a business enterprise into the red.

Six months in the hotel business, and Will was forced to admit

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS AMERICANS

that the sedentary life was distasteful to him. He found the clink of glass and china and the babble of voices discordant sounds, and he yearned for the whistle of the sharp wind across the plains, and the neighing of a good fast horse.

He had thought of a new adventurous enterprise. The trains that shuffled across the country were slow, and their woodburning locomotives were able to pull only a few cars. They could not possibly meet the demand for the merchandise created by the many thousands of people who came pouring into the West. Dreaming of the huge sums to be made in freighting by wagon, Will sold the hotel and put his last cent into a freighter's outfit; and Louisa was left alone to "take in sewing." The first trip was the last. Attacked by Indians, Will was robbed of everything. Afoot, he trudged the last thirty miles into Junction City—with nothing but his rifle and the clothes on his back.

### IV

IN JUNCTION CITY Will Cody once again ran across Wild Bill Hickok. Wild Bill was engaged in hunting horse thieves, and promptly secured for his friend a job in that enterprise. Good work, good pay. But news of the birth of a daughter turned Cody's thoughts in other directions. Having saved a sum large enough to enter business, he began to dream big dreams. With another dreamer, William Rose, he entered the real estate business. Figuring that the junction between river and railroad would be a logical town site, Rose and Cody founded the town of Rome.

In this new town they gave land to anyone who would accept it, keeping for themselves the corner lots. "Come quick," Will wrote to Louisa, "we have the world by the tail." Houses, saloons, dance halls went up with lightning speed. Within a month Rome was a bustling boom town. The land agent for the railroad came to negotiate; and finding Rose and Cody unwilling to "talk terms," he announced that the train stop would be a mile down river, and offered free transportation to all settlers. Within three



## BUFFALO BILL

days Rome was a ghost city, inhabited solely by the Codys and William Rose. The world had slipped through Will's grasp, and for the third time within two years he had lost his entire fortune. Louisa glanced disdainfully at the dead city, packed her bags, and took her daughter back East. Louisa wanted, above everything, a horse and carriage; Will possessed nothing in the world but his "poky looking plug," Brigham.

And an undying ambition to make good. His partner, William Rose, had secured a contract for grading roadbeds. The Rose and Cody Company went to work on the new job.

Although Will was unaware of the fact, his reputation as a hunter and scout had spread far and wide. This reputation led to his rescue from the dull job of grading. He was invited to hunt buffalo for the Kansas Pacific railroad. The thousands of workers swarming into the West must be fed, and buffalo meat was their principal diet. With a cry of relief, Will swung into the saddle and turned Brigham's head toward the windy plains.

Once again in his element, Will Cody outgalloped, outshot and out-daredeviled his fellow hunters—and thus earned for himself the title *Buffalo Bill*. He was popular with all his mount-mates. They liked him for his friendliness and admired him for his prowess. It was a piece of doggerel written by an admirer that gave him his nickname:

*Buffalo Bill, Buffalo Bill,  
Never missed and never will,  
Always aims and shoots to kill.*

Bill's fame had spread to the East. Everywhere they talked about the exploits of the young hunter. Trains brought enthusiastic "city folk" to see the performance of the renowned plainsman; and Bill, never bashful, reveled in the sunlight of acclaim.

And now that money as well as applause came pouring in, Louisa once more ventured into the Wild West—this time to ride proudly in the coveted carriage and to bask in the spotlight that was being trained upon her daring young husband. Her first

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meeting with "Buffalo Bill" had been a shock. She didn't recognize the tall, outlandish young man, long hair falling over his shoulders, silken mustache curling over his lip, fringed leather trousers on his legs, and a huge sombrero riding atop the whole outfit.

"Will, you go cut that hair and put some decent clothes on!" Louisa commanded.

"Aw, shucks, Louisa, all plainsmen dress like this," Bill protested.

Louisa was compelled to admit that the costume accentuated his good looks. Hair, hat and fringe remained.

## V

STEADILY the railroads moved westward, steadily the hungry settlers poured after them. The wholesale killings of the buffalo were depleting the herds, and those that were left roved farther afield. The Redmen watched in sullen anger as the Iron Horse snorted across the prairies. Muttering, they followed the depleted herds of the buffalo, and swore vengeance against the Whitemen who were forcing them into starvation. Swiftly and silently they struck at the enemy, whenever and wherever possible. Cavalrymen arrived in increasing numbers to protect the settlers. Bill was appointed quartermaster, charged with providing meat for the army.

Though the friendliest of men when treated fairly, Bill refused to be domineered into obedience. One day an officious colonel ordered him to supply buffalo. "All right, sir, if you will send along a wagon or two," said Bill.

"I'm not in the habit of sending out wagons until I know there is something to be hauled in," the colonel replied curtly.

Next day Bill rode into camp driving before him thirty buffalo, setting the camp into an uproar and bringing indignant reprimand from the colonel.

"I didn't care about asking for wagons again," Bill drawled,

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"so I furnished my own transportation." After that incident, Bill got his wagons immediately upon request.

And through all this period, sporadic attacks from the Indians. Finally a number of tribes joined forces and struck a concerted savage blow against the white "intruders." Work on the Kansas Pacific was suspended. The Government ordered additional troops to the West, and the Indian War was on in full swing. The army needed men who knew the country and the ways of the Indians—such men as Buffalo Bill. Impressed with his skill and his bravery, General Sherman appointed him Chief Scout for the Fifth Cavalry.

When peace had settled once more over the plains, Bill found himself nationally famous. An enterprising journalist, Ned Buntline, had flooded the country with nerve-tingling accounts of his adventures. From every newsstand flashed the image of Buffalo Bill, complete with fringe and flowing locks. And many a small boy's pillow concealed a copy of the lurid stories that grew up about his exploits.

Bill had moved to Omaha City. And thither flocked a stream of wealthy adventurers, for the thrill of hunting buffalo under the leadership of the famous guide. Not only the wealthy sought him out, but royalty as well. Among the celebrities who had hunted with him, Buffalo Bill boasted the Grand Duke Alexis of Russia and a Rajah from India. The animals, once killed for food, were now slaughtered for rich men's amusement. Neither the meat nor the hides were of any use to these pleasure seekers. The rotting bodies littered the plains. Though a few voices were raised in protest, the senseless massacre continued. The buffalo was fast becoming extinct.

And the foremost agent of their extinction, Buffalo Bill, received a call from Buntline to come East. Pygmalion, dazzled by the magnitude of his success, wished to exhibit his Galatea. Bill went East, carrying along with him the honor of a nomination to the Senate. He was now known as the Honorable Bill Cody.

Bill loved the East—the lights, the luxuries, and above all, the

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS AMERICANS

cheering crowds. Festive boards groaned, liquor flowed freely, and Bill did justice to them both. Having wine and dined one evening overwell at the mansion of August Belmont, he became completely befuddled and failed to keep appointments the next day. "I was out on a scouting trip and got lost," was the confused explanation that he offered.

Ned Buntline decided upon further exploitation of his masterpiece. Within twenty-four hours he concocted a melodrama in which he presented his hero to a clamorous public as *Buffalo Bill, King of the Bordermen*. Bill as an actor was on a par with Bill as a hotelkeeper, and he knew it. "You might as well try to make an actor out of a government mule," he said. But the audiences loved Bill, and Bill loved the applause. The passion for the limelight had always been in his blood. As a child he had said, "I will have a show." Now he said, "I will have a Wild West Show."

In New York Bill met Nate Salsbury—a genius in his line, the show business. At the Brevoort Hotel, they drew plans for a spectacle that would dazzle not only America, but Europe as well. Nate, a practical businessman, observed that they didn't as yet have sufficient funds to undertake the adventure. And so they parted, each to raise money in his own way. Bill's way was to go back to his scouting.

His farewell party was a tremendous success. The celebrants practically carried him to his train in his evening clothes. When he reached his destination, Bill mounted a horse and reported for duty. The commanding officer of the Third Cavalry, to which he had been assigned, stared in disgust at the *clawhammer* suit and stovepipe hat. "Who in thunder are you?"

"Why, General, I am your scout," Bill replied.

"You can't possibly be Cody. Let down your hair!"

A welcoming shout arose from the throats of officers and enlisted men as Bill's locks tumbled from his stovepipe down over his shoulders.

Bill Cody hadn't lost any of his ability or courage during his sojourn in the East. He now added to his trophies not only the

## BUFFALO BILL

Congressional Medal of Honor, but also the headdress, tomahawk and scalp of the dreaded Chief Yellow Hand, whom he had killed in hand-to-hand combat. But before long these triumphs became sour to his taste, the life of the plainsman a little boring. Bill longed to savor again the exhilaration of crowds and bright lights.

It was then that he met "Doc" Carver, who fired him once more with enthusiasm for a show of his own. Together they organized and rehearsed a company of hunters and rough riders; and in 1883 they appeared for the first time at the Fair Grounds in Omaha, billed as *The Wild West, Rocky Mountain and Prairie Exhibition*. Their success was immediate.

From Omaha they toured eastward, playing to huge crowds and earning huge sums. But by the time they reached Chicago it had become evident that Doc was a liability. The one word—erratic—described his marksmanship, behavior, and honesty. Their profits evaporated into thin air, and disorder prevailed in the entire company. Bill Cody appealed to his old friend, Nate Salsbury, who had just returned from a trip to Europe. Nate was still possessed by his old dream. Sending the muddled Doc about his own business, he took matters into his own hands.

Under Nate's management, the show was reorganized upon a sound financial footing. His genius as a showman created a number of features which relegated Barnum's "Greatest Show on Earth" to an unenviable second place.

One day a diminutive young lady presented herself before Bill, asking for employment as a sharpshooter. Bill shook his head. "I am ready to work for six weeks without pay," she said. Bill smiled as she took her stance and aimed at the target. She had fired only a few shots when Bill stopped her. "The job is yours," he declared, "and you get paid from the start." The young lady was Annie Oakley, whose name was to become a household word throughout the land. Bill took her into the circle of his close friends, giving her the affectionate nickname—*Little Missy*.

Bill and Nate worked harmoniously together. Their regard for

each other was mutual—save in one respect. Nate didn't like his partner's attachment to the bottle. After a number of Bill's orgies, he threatened to dissolve the partnership. Bill gave his pledge not to drink during the show season. With a few minor backslides, he kept to his word.

In the meantime, his profits grew into a Niagara of gold. A Niagara with a bottomless sieve. As fast as his money poured in, Bill poured it out again—into mines, ranches, stores, horses, hotels, and the least profitable but most satisfying of all investments—friends.

The time had come when Nate and Bill were to realize the most exciting phase of their old dream—an offer to take their show to Europe. Chartering the steamer, *State of Nebraska*, they loaded her with performers, livestock and equipment, and set forth to conquer a new continent.

In England Bill had his first taste of the plaudits of royalty. Victoria enjoyed a special performance ordered for herself and her royal guests. This was a life Bill loved. Always dashing, he was a vision of fire and whirlwind as he galloped into the arena to within a few feet of the royal box. His fringed buckskin costume was sparkling white; and white too, his huge sombrero. The King of American riders, the Queen of the Seven Seas. Everybody shouted approval as the two exchanged a royal smile.

Italy, Germany, Spain—all thrilled to the exciting Wild West Show. In Germany the company was surprised at the great interest displayed by the army officers. These military men cared not so much for the performance as for the methods employed in the organization and transportation of so large a group. Above all, they admired the portable kitchens used to feed the company. Years later the reason for their interest became apparent. In 1914 the German army moved into battle with the first complete field kitchens ever used in warfare—modeled upon those of the Buffalo Bill Show.

When the show returned to America, it brought along a number of added attractions—Cossacks, Circassians, Arabs, Chas-



*Edwin Booth*



*Buffalo Bill*



seurs—"wild" men of the Old World to thrill the audiences of the New.

But to no avail. The European tour had been the peak in Buffalo Bill's career. From now on, his fortunes began a relentless downward march. Although his public was unaware of it, there was trouble in Bill's camp. Nate was too ill to attend to the business management, and his share of the ownership had fallen into other hands. Hands neither as capable nor as friendly as Nate's.

As Bill's western holdings—his mines and his ranches—ate up whatever money he could pour into them, and as his own tremendous expenses grew ever greater, he became desperate. He borrowed from his friends and drew ahead on his salary until he fell hopelessly into debt.

And disgrace. When trouble with Spain was imminent, everybody looked toward the "Great Fighter" and asked what he would do. "When war is declared," Bill said, "I will fight." War was declared, and Bill kept riding his horse only in the ranks of the showmen. There were other questions that the public asked. What of this English actress that Bill had brought home with him? And the whispers that were being aired in the newspapers? What of this talk about his suing Louisa for divorce, and his taking the young actress up to his favorite ranch where Louisa had never been allowed to set foot?

"When I am really needed, I will fight," Bill declared with a flourish. About the actress and the divorce Bill kept silence.

War tightened its grip. Colonel Theodore Roosevelt called for more men. "Any day now I will be leaving," Bill said. "Teddy" stormed San Juan Hill, events raced forward, the war was won—and Bill kept galloping about in his white buckskins. His many admirers began to lose interest. What they didn't know was the fact that Bill had been unable to enlist; he was mortgaged to the man who now owned his company.

But what of the divorce? The whole Cody clan had risen to the defense of Louisa. There was no reason, they said, for Bill to divorce the woman who had shared his struggles—who had waited

quietly while he capered over the world—who had watched with him at the deathbed of their son. Even Bill's sisters, whom he supported along with their husbands, opposed his action. And they had their way. Bill and Louisa were reconciled, and his wife at last occupied the ranch from which she had been excluded for so many years.

Louisa had her husband again—but it was a husband that time had changed. The flowing locks gleamed as white now as the fringed garments. Age and anxiety were exacting their measure from an overused body. Bill had to be helped onto his horse to make his nightly appearance; and though he still swaggered in the saddle, he had to be lifted off his horse at the end of the show . . .

And now Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show continued—but without Bill. The man who had taken possession of the show wanted the magical name but not the decrepit body of the King of the Wild West. Bill was placed in a lesser, one-night-stand company, and his soul was sick.

A derelict of a man. From sordid hotels and third-rate boarding houses in out-of-the-way towns he penned innumerable letters asking for loans. Bill's "boss" had made him acquainted with an appalling fact; Bill's life was mortgaged to the very end. It was the only way in which he could discharge his debt.

And so he now appeared nightly—with practically no pay. Bill stroked his long hair (he now wore a toupée), and he stroked his most treasured possession—the Congressional Medal. And then he wrote a pathetic letter. The medal entitled him to an income of ten dollars a month; that ten dollars, he told the President, would be most welcome. The answer stunned the man who had lowered his pride to the extent of begging for such a pittance. Thousands of medals, he was told, had been awarded to men who were not eligible to receive them—that is, to civilians. His own medal fell into that category, he was "regretfully" informed, and therefore the Government felt "constrained" to revoke it.

Bill held the letter in his hand and gazed into empty space. He

## BUFFALO BILL

saw neither the peeling plaster of the wall, nor the soiled curtains; he saw only the thing he dreaded most in the world—a pauper's grave.

In November (1916) Bill made his farewell appearance; but his wish was not to retire. His last dream was the same as his first—he wanted his own show. One thing he had learned—you can rely upon your rich friends only when you are on the upgrade. He turned now to the moneylenders. But age, overwork and over-indulgence had taken their toll. Bill collapsed and was carried to the home of his youngest sister.

Informed that he had only a few hours to live, Bill played in character to the last.

“Is it really that bad, doctor?”

“I’m afraid it is, Bill.”

“Well, then, let’s have a good card game. What do you say to five-high?”

Intrepid Bill. Ready to ride with a swagger into Kingdom Come.



**JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER**

*Important Dates in the Life of John D. Rockefeller*

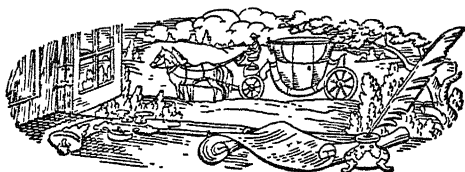
- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1839—Born, Richford, N. Y.                                 | Rockefeller worth a billion dollars.                            |
| 1853—Family moved to Cleveland.                            | 1900—Began to withdraw from business to devote self to charity. |
| 1858—Formed business partnership of Clark and Rockefeller. | 1901—Founded Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research.        |
| 1860—Entered oil business.                                 | 1911—Resigned from presidency of Standard Oil Company.          |
| 1865—Built Standard Oil Works at Cleveland.                | Standard Oil Company "dissolved."                               |
| 1867—Incorporated Standard Oil Company.                    | 1913—Started Rockefeller Foundation.                            |
| 1881—Standard Oil Company became a trust.                  | 1937—Died, Florida.   |
| 1892—Standard Oil Company declared illegal by courts.      |   |

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# John Davison Rockefeller

1839–1937

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**R**OCKEFELLER WAS one of the most self-centered individuals in all history. He was a man with a single passion—gold. Even the most ardent of his admirers, Mark Hanna, observed that “Rockefeller is sane in every respect save one: he is money-mad!”

Rockefeller came by his money-madness from his German ancestry, the Rockenfellers of Sagendorf. “Away back in the money-age,” a genealogist who had investigated the family history reported, “the Rockenfellers had money—coins—bearing their name.”

From his infancy, Johnny was taught to worship the golden-calf-god of his ancestors. His father took special pains to inspire his children with a genius for enticing the coins from other people’s pockets into their own. A quack doctor who claimed to cure everything, from chilblains to cancer, Bill Rockefeller believed that the Lord had created the many to serve as suckers for the few. And he transmitted this belief to his children by many a concrete example. “I cheat my boys every chance I get,” he boasted. “I want to make ’em sharp. I trade with the boys and skin ’em and I just beat ’em everytime I can. I want to make ’em sharp.”

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS AMERICANS

And Johnny grew up sharp and ruthless as a razor's edge. He was only ten (1849) when he discovered the important fact that money is like a fruit-bearing tree. Out of the seed of a loan it produces the fruit of interest. For some years past he had been saving his pennies in a little blue bowl. One day he heard that a neighbor wanted to borrow fifty dollars. The neighbor was willing to pay an interest of seven per cent. Johnny ran to his father and asked him to explain the whole thing. "What is interest? What do you mean by seven per cent? How much will that make on fifty dollars?" And with the magic of the explanation singing in his ears, he took fifty dollars out of his bowl and loaned it to the neighbor. A year later he received his principal of fifty dollars and his interest of three dollars and a half. "Gee whiz," he cried, "I never knew you could make money without working for it!" And from that day on, as he declared many years later, he was "determined to make money work for me."

## II

OF THE THREE R's in his school curriculum, he cared only for 'rithmetic. "Reading and writing are a waste of time." In the Rockefeller household there were no books. But there was a good deal of figuring. Bill Rockefeller loved to explain, by facts and figures, how he had outsmarted everybody with whom he had had any dealings. "When I grow up," said John, "I'll be smart like my father. And I'll make a lot of money. *A hundred thousand dollars!*"

"And God willing," said his mother, "you will make it, my son."

His mother was a pious woman. She believed in God. Not in the God of the Prophets who required justice and mercy, but in the God of the Patriarchs who encouraged enterprise and wealth. Rockefeller grew up with the conviction that the Lord had elected him, as He had elected Jacob, to outsmart the Labans of the world and to become the guardian of His wealth for the less



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astute members of the human race. "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings." Throughout his life Rockefeller suffered from an atrophied conscience. He never felt that he had deprived others of their rights. It was God's doing. "God gave me my money," he once declared to a representative of the *Woman's Home Companion*. He was God's favorite, he believed, not only because he was *smarter*, but also because he was *better* than his fellows. When he cornered the oil distribution of America, he was but following in the footsteps of Joseph who had cornered the grain distribution of Egypt.

Rockefeller found nothing inconsistent between his religious beliefs and his business practices. He regarded his wealth as a reward for his virtue. The entire philosophy of his life—a philosophy which he had acquired in the home environment of his childhood—could be summed up in a few words: "Serve the Lord and exploit thy neighbors."

### III

EVEN as a youngster, he delighted his father with his ability to drive a bargain. "The boy," said the elder Rockefeller, "has a magical tongue. He bewitches people into thinking he does them a favor when he fleeces them."

He sent John to a commercial school (in Cleveland) to study "facts and figures; all other learning is useless if you want to make money." John D. took this lesson to heart. He became an expert bookkeeper; and when he left the commercial school (in 1855), he was a devout believer in two sacred entities—the Ledger and the Lord. Broad-shouldered, blue-eyed and straight-lipped, he faced the world confidently. His voice was soft and low and pleasant to the ear. And it was always ready with some pious platitude. His schoolmates had called him Deacon. He joined the Erie Baptist Church and offered his clerical services, free, to the Board of Trustees. "If I help the Lord, the Lord will help me." He was eager to hire God as his official guide to the goldfields of the earth.

"A very exemplary young man," said the minister of the Baptist Church. "Attends strictly to his business." Armed with this flattering recommendation from his spiritual adviser, young Rockefeller applied for a job at the warehouse of Hewitt and Tuttle. He got the job, and devoted himself to his work, and regularly gave his tithe to the church—and within two years he rose from the position of errand boy to that of head bookkeeper.

And then, at eighteen, he felt that he had worked enough for other people. He wanted to go into business for himself. And so he borrowed \$1000 from his father—"the interest, son, will be 10%, not a whit less"—and formed a "Produce and Commission Brokerage" with a young partner by the name of Maurice B. Clark. That night he knelt and prayed for guidance and success—to the partnership, if possible, but at any rate to John D.

Before long, John D. had outstripped his partner. He was now the sole owner of the brokerage. Young Clark had wanted to mix a little pleasure into his business. He had asked Rockefeller to take an afternoon off occasionally and to go sailing with him. And, when Rockefeller had refused, Clark had warned him that all work and no play would make Jack a dull boy. "Yes," replied Rockefeller, "but it will also make Jack a *rich* boy."

#### IV

ROCKEFELLER attended to his business, saved his money and waited for the big opportunity. It came in the oil rush of the early sixties. New lamps for old. Genii of petroleum spouting out of the earth and towering into the clouds. Aladdin cities springing up overnight—cities of grease and gambling and filth, whirlpools of bad whiskey and bad women and bad faith. Geysers of liquid gold.

This liquid gold attracted Rockefeller like a magnet. He packed up his belongings and went to Oil Creek. But he kept his head. Instead of joining the crazy merry-go-round of gaiety and gambling, he read his Bible and scratched long lines of figures on

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his carefully ruled sheets of paper. You buy a barrel of crude oil for a dollar. You refine it and sell it for twenty dollars. Multiply this barrel by a hundred, a thousand, a million, ten million, a hundred million! . . . Another man might have become intoxicated with the daring magnitude of these figures. But not Rockefeller. He proceeded methodically to translate the figures into facts. He must gather all the oil business, if possible, into his own hands. And so he purchased his own crude oil, built his own refinery, made his own barrels, put up his own storage tanks and acted as his own middleman. He was only twenty-six years old; yet he was already, to quote the felicitous phrase of John K. Winkler, America's outstanding "Portrait in Oil." A rather enticing portrait, in spite of his self-centered philosophy. Small glittering eyes that twinkled with humor—especially when he closed a "smart" deal; a firm, respect-compelling jaw; a mouth whose callous lines could melt into an ingratiating smile when he wanted to gain your good will; a fringe of reddish silk side-whiskers that gave him the look of a holy man; and long bony fingers trained to caress all the unsuspecting little flies into the web of his commercial genius. A skillful, fascinating, determined and voracious spider of a man.

### V

HE WAS perhaps the hardest-working businessman in the country. Yet he found the time to court and to win the hand of Laura C. Spelman.

On his wedding day he worked several hours at the office. Before he left, he treated his employees to a good dinner. At the end of the dinner, he turned to the foreman.

"Treat them well," he said. "*but see that they work.*"

Rockefeller was fortunate in his marriage. Miss Spelman had been a schoolteacher; but, like her fiancé, she possessed a most unscholarly affection for business. Together they enjoyed a happy companionship of commercial and domestic harmony.

His growing family—they had five children in all—drove him more passionately than ever to become the richest man in America. Bent upon his single purpose, he made no friends. As his business expanded and he found himself in need of new capital, he began to take in partners. But he looked upon these partners not as friends or even as business companions. He reduced them to the rank of subordinates. His personality and his genius dominated them all. Andrews, Flagler, Rogers, Archbold, Clark—all these men are remembered not as his associates but as his agents. The agents of his dictatorial and unbreakable will. He had a way of bending everybody to his demands. He never argued with people. He either got them to agree with him or he crushed them. "There are too many people in the oil business. Drive them out." And one by one he drove out—that is, he bought out or squeezed out—his competitors. Those of them whose talents he needed in his monopolistic plans he absorbed into his organization. The rest he dropped by the wayside.

And he did all this with a clear conscience. "It was right between me and my God. If I had to do it tomorrow I would do it again . . . do it a hundred times."

The method which he used in outwitting his competitors was as ingenious as it was vicious. He killed them with a double-edged weapon of rebates. He made secret arrangements with the railroads to carry his own oil at ten cents a barrel and his competitors' oil at thirty-five cents a barrel. But that was only half the story. He made further arrangements whereby the railroads paid back to him the extra twenty-five cents which they charged to his competitors. In the face of such competition his business rivals were helpless. It was like a duel in which only one of the men is armed, and in which the armed man strikes from the back. When asked what he thought of the morality of his rebates, Rockefeller laughingly retorted: "Laddie, I'm agin 'em—unless I'm in 'em."

And thus he went on merging and submerging, until in 1870 nearly all his rivals were killed off and the first of the oil trusts, the Standard Oil Company, was born.

## VI

ROCKEFELLER was now thirty-one years old. To add dignity to his years, he had grown a full beard. He still retained his honored position in the church. He was as sincerely pious as he was sincerely predatory. It paid him good dividends to be devout and clever and ruthless. It provided him with great comforts in this world, and prepared the way—so he believed—for still greater comforts in the next. He never for a moment suspected that what he was doing was not good in the eyes of the Lord. It was with a perfectly clear conscience that he accumulated his vast reservoir of oil and then parceled it out, at his own price, for the lamps of the poor. And, as his monopoly kept growing, he kept raising the price more and more. Desperate men began to send him threats against his life, newspaper editors bespattered him with showers of uncomplimentary ink, and a grand jury indicted him as “a cheat, conspirator and business fraud.” But he sat serenely in his office and manipulated his figures and praised the Lord and defied the world. Nothing, he was determined, would stop him from becoming the richest man in America.

And the richer he grew, the lonelier he grew. “Open yourself up to no one, and allow no one to open himself up to you.” One day he observed a clerk talking to a stranger. “What did the man want here?” he asked the clerk when the stranger had left.

“Nothing, sir. The man is a friend of mine.”

“Why didn’t you keep your mouth shut when he was here?”

“But, sir, he is just a friend.”

“Friend or no friend, be careful. Keep your mouth shut. You never can tell what they’re trying to find out.”

He was uncommunicative even toward his own partners. When they asked him about his plans for their mutual interests, he would say:

“You’d better not know. If you don’t know anything, you won’t tell anything.”

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He suffered from social blindness, a disease common to military aggressors and financial conquerors. And being socially blind, he was ethically obtuse. He was unable to distinguish between right and wrong. Justice was as vague a quality to him as light is to a man physically blind. He lacked the moral vision to see himself in relation to other people. The world, as he imagined it, consisted of one man—himself—surrounded by millions of worms. He used them as bait, or stepped upon them with equal indifference. Their wriggings served merely as a source of amusement to him. "People are so easily fooled." Once, when he managed to fool the people, relates his biographer, Ida Tarbell, "he was so overjoyed he kicked his heels and hugged himself and said: 'I'm bound to be rich! *Bound to be rich!* BOUND TO BE RICH!'"

In his quest for riches, he stifled his affection for everybody outside of his family circle. He still indulged in his charities, to be sure, but even in his charity he was cold and calculating and economical. When one of his acquaintances was down in his luck, Rockefeller sent him a pair of old shoes. "Have these shoes re-cobbled," said the accompanying note, "and they will last another year."

And the Standard Oil Company, the child of Rockefeller's extraordinary brain, kept growing bigger and bigger. It monopolized not only the land, but tried even to monopolize the laws, of the country. One day in the fall of 1872 a circular went out from the Standard Oil Company to all its employees. This circular, labeled "Order No. 1," began as follows: "We deem the election of ——" (a man charged with being a professional lobbyist) "vital to our interests as well as yours." The Standard Oil was now launched upon a campaign to dominate the politics as well as the economics of the country. "Politics in the latter half of the nineteenth century," a cynic has remarked, "consisted in the passing of laws to help the strong against the weak"

And so, by means of bullying and bribery—in those days a *bribe* was conveniently labeled as a *loan*—the Standard Oil Com-

pany had by 1900 become a worldwide Empire of Greed. And the Oil King of the World, though personally Rockefeller kept aloof from the political activities of his company, could now enjoy the distinction of being one of the richest men in history.

And one of the most detested. As he grew old, he confided to an acquaintance that he wanted desperately to be loved. Yet "wherever he turned," writes his biographer John T. Flynn, "he saw the evidences of hate." His face, like his heart, had become gray and shriveled and pinched. Rockefeller was turning into a dried-up image of emotional starvation. A sad old King Midas of the Industrial Age, he was unable to feel anything warmer than the touch of gold.

## VII

AND THEN he entered upon a new ambition: he began to buy esteem. His conscience, which had been serenely asleep all his life, was now awakened at last. Perhaps there was some grain of truth, he concluded, in what people were saying of him. It wouldn't be a bad idea to throw a generous measure of oil upon the troubled waters of public opinion. He opened up his purse strings in a flood of charity. He donated a hundred thousand dollars to a church organization. The gift was roundly condemned in the public press. A clergyman delivered a sermon against Rockefeller in which he referred to his donations as *tainted money*. This phrase was taken up on the vaudeville stage. "Sure his money is tainted! 'Tain't for you and 'tain't for me!"

But the public soon got over its scruples. Churches, hospitals and colleges began eagerly to accept his benefactions. And to glorify the benefactor. "John D. Rockefeller," declared a professor at Chicago University, "is superior in creative genius to Shakespeare, Homer and Dante."

And thus, with a flourish of the pen, one of the most hated had become one of the most respected men in America. Rockefeller now went about with an oil-burning halo around his head.

His charities mounted from day to day. To him they meant no sacrifice. They represented merely a handful of cold figures subtracted from his fabulous sums of gold. Some of his charities, to be sure, have performed a great public service. The Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, for example, has resulted in the saving of many lives. But what of the many lives stunted and crushed in Rockefeller's relentless reaping of the harvest of his wealth?

Yet we must not be unfair to Rockefeller. He was no worse than the other monopolists of his day. He was merely one of a type. It was an age of unprecedented expansion. The economic atmosphere of the country was breeding a race of Titans; and such men as Rockefeller and Carnegie and Morgan and Hill and Armour and Huntington happened to be the best adapted for growth in such an atmosphere. They were not men of high ethical standards. But high ethical standards produce martyrs and not masters. It is just as foolish to blame a Rockefeller for not being a Lincoln as it would be to blame an oak tree for not being a rosebush. The founders of the big American trusts played an inevitable and important part in the economic development of the United States. It was a dramatic but futile gesture when the government, in 1911, officially "busted" the Standard Oil Trust. In accordance with this official decree, the Standard Oil Company was to be thenceforth divided into several small concerns. It was like dividing the Atlantic Ocean with a carving knife. Both historically and economically Rockefeller was right when he said: "If we limit opportunity we will have to put the brakes on our national development . . . We must build up, build up for years to come . . . We are too young a nation for this tearing down."

Rockefeller was brilliant enough to realize that the tendency of American progress, of *all* progress, is not toward division but toward unification. Individuals are united into families, families into states, states into nations. The same is true of economic development. Individuals combine into partnerships, partnerships into corporations, corporations into trusts. Large scale production



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is vital to a nation that has learned to live in a large way. But we have not as yet learned how to *regulate* this producing on a large scale so that it may redound to the greatest interest of the greatest number. We have allowed it to become an instrument of selfish exploitation instead of mutual co-operation.

And Rockefeller, a selfish yet sincere exploiter, felt that he was acting within his moral rights. A man is but the measure of his day. Rockefeller lived in a money-making day, and he felt it his duty to make as much money as he could. "God gave me my money," he said. "I believe the power to make money is a gift from Heaven . . . Having been endowed with the gift I possess, I believe it is my duty to make money and still more money, and to use the money I make for the good of my fellow man according to the dictates of my conscience."

And thus, believing in his own righteousness, he selfishly and serenely waited for the end. "His daily life," observed a friend shortly before his death, "is a round of work, play and, above all, gratitude."



THOMAS A. EDISON

*Important Dates in the Life of Thomas A. Edison*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1847—Born, Milan, Ohio.   | 1876—Moved to Menlo Park, N. J.  |
| 1854—Family moved to Port Huron, Michigan.                      | 1877—Invented phonograph.  |
| 1859—Became trainboy.   | 1878—Made Chevalier of the French Legion of Honor.                         |
| 1862—Began to publish, for trainmen, the Grand Trunk Herald.    | 1879—Demonstrated invention of electric light at Menlo Park.               |
| 1863—Became telegraph operator.                                 | 1879-1931—Engaged in numerous inventions. Took out more than 1000 patents. |
| 1864—Invented automatic telegraph repeater.                     | 1931—Died, West Orange, N. J.  |
| 1869—Came to New York. Invented improvements for stock tickers. |  |
| 1872—Invented the kinesiograph (moving-picture machine).        |  |

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# Thomas Alva Edison

1847-1931

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**G**ENIUS is the ability to do the hardest things the easiest way. One day, when Edison was working on a practical lamp for his newly discovered electric light, he found it necessary to get the cubical content of an irregular glass bulb. Too busy himself to attend to the job, he called in his most brilliant mathematician to help him. Arming himself with many sheets of foolscap, the great savant sat down to work. A week later Edison asked him how he was getting along.

"Very nicely, Mr. Edison, but I am not finished yet."

Edison looked at the formidable array of charts and figures submitted by the mathematician. "How much longer will it take you to solve the problem?"

"Oh, another week, I expect."

"Let me show you how to do it in a minute," said Edison.

He filled the bulb with water.

"Now measure the water, and you've got the answer."

## II

EDISON POSSESSED not only a knack for hitting upon the obvious, but an infinite capacity for taking pains. In his effort to perfect

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the storage battery, he had made ten thousand unsuccessful tests on various chemical combinations. "Isn't it a shame," said a friend, "that with all this tremendous labor you haven't been able to get any results?"

"Why, man," said Edison, "I've got lots of results. I've discovered several thousand things that won't work."

Edison came by his energy from a stock of sturdy pioneers who were forever seeking for the things that worked through the discarding of things that wouldn't work. His great-grandfather, John Edison, fled from Staten Island to Nova Scotia in order to escape hanging as a Tory in the Revolutionary War. His grandfather, Samuel Edison, migrated from Nova Scotia in search of a better home and found it on the banks of the Otter River, in Upper Canada. His father, Samuel Edison—"a giant of a man"—became involved in a plot to overthrow the Tory régime in Canada and to replace it with a representative government like that of the United States. The plot was discovered and "Sammy" Edison made his escape across trackless forests and ice-bound rivers—"it was my long legs that saved me"—until he found safety in the village of Milan, Ohio. Here he set up a mill and sent for his family through the kindly offices of a barge captain by the name of Alva Bradley. And here, in the midst of a blizzard on the morning of February 11, 1847, he greeted the arrival of his seventh child, a son. They christened the baby Thomas Alva—the second name in honor of Mr. Bradley.

From his very infancy Alva was preoccupied, ingenious, and ready to "learn something about everything." At six he set his father's barn on fire "just to see what it would do." It burned down to the ground, and almost burned Alva along with it. For this, the first of his experiments, his father punished him with a public spanking in the village square.

On another occasion he tried sitting on a nest of goose eggs to see if he could hatch them. All that he hatched was an omelet on the seat of his pants. Another spanking, another discovery of the things that wouldn't work.

His entire childhood was a succession of experiments. When he was seven years old, his parents moved to Port Huron, Michigan. The new Edison home had a lofty tower overlooking Lake Huron and the St. Clair River. Young Alva—Al for short—spent a great part of his time scanning the horizon through an old telescope perched on top of the tower.

Watching the heavens above, and studying the elements below. In the cellar of his house he had set up a chemical laboratory with "Poison Don't Touch" labels on all the bottles, in order to keep them away from inquisitive fingers.

"An addled youngster," said the neighbors. One day he fed an enormous quantity of seidlitz powders to his little Dutch playmate, Michael Oates. "Why did you do it, son?" asked his father. "Well, Pop," said Alva, "I wanted to see if the seidlitz powders would form enough gas in his stomach to make him fly."

The children left him alone to his "crazy" games. The elders shook their heads. Even his father thought there was something queer about him. The only one who believed in him was his mother. She encouraged him in his experiments, and on his ninth birthday she bought him a copy of Parker's *School of Natural Philosophy*. "The greatest present I ever received," said Edison of this book many years later.

He used this book not only as a basis for his experiments, but as a stimulant to his imagination. And he fed his healthy imagination on many another volume. By his tenth birthday he had familiarized himself with such works as Hume's *History of England*, Sears' *History of the World*, Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and the *Dictionary of Sciences*.

Yet Al Edison was no bookworm. On the contrary, he was a very practical youngster. When the railroad was built between Port Huron and Detroit, he applied for a job as "news-butcher" on the train. A "merchant on his own" at twelve, he wasn't content with only one occupation. In his spare moments, when he had finished peddling his newspapers, he busied himself in the

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baggage car, writing and printing a newspaper of his own, or in a chemical laboratory which he had set up in another car. This laboratory, incidentally, cost him his job on the train and thus indirectly led to his study of telegraphy and to his first invention. One day, as the train was bumping over a rough road, a stick of phosphorus from Edison's pile of chemicals fell to the floor and set fire to the baggage car. The conductor extinguished the flames and kicked Edison out of his railroad laboratory into the bigger laboratory of the world.

Al Edison—at that time he pronounced his name *Eadison*—was not sorry to lose his job as a news peddler. In his daily trips from city to city, he had become acquainted with the telegraph operators at the railroad stations. Their work fascinated him. He decided to become one of them. Devoting as many as eighteen hours a day to practice, he soon mastered the job, stretched a wire between the drugstore and the depot at Port Huron, and set himself up as a "private merchant of local messages." But the businessmen of the town preferred to receive and to deliver their local messages in person. His earnings averaged less than fifty cents a month.

Yet his knowledge of telegraphy, combined with his mental resourcefulness, enabled him to come to the rescue of his townsmen on one occasion when an ice jam had severed the wires between Port Huron and Canada. Due to the floating ice, it was impossible to make the repairs. But this did not phase Tom—he had now changed from his second to his first name. He promised to deliver the messages across the lake to Canada if they would supply him with a locomotive and an engineer. Smiling skeptically, the railroad authorities granted his request. But their skepticism changed to admiration when they saw the simplicity of his plan. All he did was to toot out a telegraph message on the engine in whistles of dots and dashes. At first there was no answer; but when Edison had repeated the message several times, a Canadian operator caught on and tooted back a message in reply. It was perhaps the first instance of "wireless telegraphy" on record.



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A remarkably clever young fellow. And remarkably untidy. He spent his money on books, and left practically nothing for his clothes. One winter he went without an overcoat and nearly froze to death. An experimenting vagabond. From city to city he drifted, and from job to job. Easily hired, easily fired. His ideas were too "crazy" for his superiors. Talked about sending two messages over a wire. "Why, any damn fool knows that a wire can't be worked both ways at the same time." This "lunatic" was a bad influence upon the other fellows in the office. "Out you go!"

And out he kept going until finally he found his way to Boston. It was on a midwinter day in 1868 when he walked into the Boston office of the Western Union and asked for a job as a telegraph operator. The superintendent, George F. Milliken, looked up from his desk. What a disreputable-looking hobo! Pants too short and too tight and all but waterproof with smudge. Shoes torn and twisted out of shape. Hat so ragged that one of his ears protruded through a hole. Shirt, a patchwork of tatters that hadn't been washed for weeks. And hair, a matted jumble that seemingly had never known the touch of a comb.

Tom Edison had written from Canada to a Boston friend about this job, and the friend had shown the letter to Milliken. "If he can take it off the wire in such a script," said Milliken as he looked at the printlike handwriting of the letter, "tell him he can have the job."

But when Milliken looked at Edison with his unkempt hair and his unwashed shirt and his rickety shoes, he was not quite so sure of the young fellow's ability. "Come back at five-thirty," he said reluctantly, "and perhaps I'll give you a trial."

Edison came back at the appointed hour and found the clerks grinning at their desks. They had prepared a practical joke against this country bumpkin who dared to ask for a job as a city telegrapher. They had wired to one of the fastest New York operators to send a special news report of eight hundred words, and now they sat back to see the fun.

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Picking up a bundle of blanks, Edison placed himself at the table assigned to him. "Ready!" he signaled, and the message began to pour in. Faster and faster came the words, but Edison was equal to the job. As his fingers flew over the sheets, he glanced up; and then for the first time he understood the grin on the other fellows' faces. So they wanted to show him up, did they? Very well, he would teach them a lesson! Opening the key of his instrument, he tapped to the galloping operator at the other end: "Come on, boy, don't go to sleep. Shake yourself and get busy with the other foot."

The New York operator surrendered, and the clerks in the Boston office rushed up to Edison and showered him with their congratulations. Right then and there they acknowledged him as the fastest telegraph operator in the Western Union.

### III

"ANY DAMN FOOL knows that a wire can't be worked both ways." Again and again the skeptics kept reminding Edison of this natural "fact." But Edison persisted in his experiments and proved the "fact" to be a fiction. In the May issue of 1868, the *Journal of the Telegraph* made the announcement that Edison had "achieved the impossible." A few months later, the following note appeared in the same journal:

"T. A. Edison has resigned his situation in the Western Union office, Boston, and will devote his time to bringing out his inventions."

A daring step for a penniless young man. It meant foodless days and sleepless nights. Offers to sell his inventions, delays, refusals, disappointments, but never despair. "You wait, they will come to me yet."

And they came to him sooner even than he had dreamed. A shrewd businessman for whom Edison had once worked, General Marshal Lefferts, was watching his inventions. He saw their financial possibilities. One day he summoned the hungry young wizard

to his office. "How much will you take for all your contraptions?"

Edison thought quickly. Should he ask for three thousand? He could manage with that sum for the present. Five thousand? Oh, no, that was preposterous! Lefferts would most likely kick him out of the office if he dared to mention that sum.

"Make me an offer, General."

"Very well, would you accept forty thousand?"

Until he received his check, Edison wasn't sure whether Lefferts had said *four* thousand or *forty* thousand. When he looked at the check he almost fainted. What would he do with all this fabulous amount of money?

Yet the fabulous amount melted away in a fabulously short time. His experiments always ran ahead of his cash. Opening a workshop in Newark, he paid the highest possible wages for the best possible workmen. "I have one shop which employs 18 men," he wrote to his parents, "and I am fitting up another shop which will employ 150 men." He had no accountant, and kept no books. On one hook he hung all the bills he owed; on another, all the bills owed him. "This is the simplest sort of bookkeeping. Why ball myself up with all kinds of complicated figures?"

And thus, pouring his money and his mind into the secret crucibles of nature, he went on with his experiments. Multiple telegraphy—two, four, eight messages over a single wire at the same time. An electric stock-ticker instrument. An instrument that reproduced the human voice—"I'll bet you a barrel of apples against three dollars," he challenged the skeptics, "that this instrument will talk." An Aladdin's lamp that would light up the world with a new electric force. Crude discoveries thus far, mere foreshadowings of the miracles that he was to perform in these fields later on.

All work and work, save for a brief vacation to the "Wild West"—and time off to get married. Hardly a prepossessing bridegroom. Refused to wear white gloves at his wedding. "I've married a bear of a man," said his wife—the former Mary Stillwell—"but what an adorable bear!" Though gruff and absent-

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minded toward the rest of the world, he was all tenderness toward Mary.

And, later on, toward the children—Marion and Tommy. He nicknamed them *Dot* and *Dash*. It was his greatest pleasure to play the clown for them in his spare moments. "He would don Mary's dresses"—we are quoting his sister-in-law Alice who lived with the Edisons—"and romp and play around the house with the youngsters. They had a stereopticon and he would sometimes go behind the screen and stand on his head, and go through various antics to amuse them."

And there were times when to amuse his children meant the greatest physical torture. "He was a great sufferer from earache"—again we are quoting Alice—"and I have seen him sit on the edge of a bed and fairly grind holes in the carpet with the heels of his shoes, he would be suffering such pain."

A little play, much work, incessant pain and an infinite patience—these were the ingredients which, combined with a flaming imagination, enabled Edison to transmute matter into motion and light. But most important of all, perhaps, was his extraordinary memory for details—his ability to coördinate apparently isolated facts into a coherent unit. Edison's memory was the amazement of psychologists. It was almost photographic in its scope. One day, as he was working over the plans for a new mechanical device in a cement plant, he examined the old machine, went home without having jotted down a single note, and compiled a list of six hundred items in the old machine that required modification or improvement. Hardly a bolt or a screw had failed to impress itself upon the retina of his mental eye.

His retentive memory was like a well-stocked and well-organized mechanic's toolbox. Everything was in its logical place; and whenever he wanted to put several facts together, he could get at them without any waste of time or unnecessary fumbling. As a result of this faculty of orderly analysis, he was able to do more constructive thinking in a day than the average man is able to do in a lifetime.

## THOMAS A. EDISON

But his inclusive memory and his ability to mold individual facts into related units would never have got him very far were it not for his endurance. As a general rule, he slept only four hours a day. "Life," he said, "is too important to waste in excessive snoring. There are too many things to be done. There are so many experiments waiting, and it takes so long to bring even a single experiment to a definite conclusion." It took him many years to perfect some of his inventions—years of incessant toil, fifteen hours, sixteen hours, seventeen hours, sometimes even eighteen hours a day. "I have no time for loafing as yet," he said on his sixty-seventh birthday. "I shall begin to loaf when I am eighty."

A sublime endurance, an equally sublime courage. In 1915 his laboratory at West Orange, consisting of six buildings, burned down to the ground. The buildings were not insured, and the loss amounted to five million dollars. "That's all right," he said, "I'll make a fresh start tomorrow morning. No one's ever too old to make a fresh start."

### IV

WHILE HE WAS in the midst of his experiments with the electric bulb, there was a sudden blackout in his own household. His wife, Mary, died of a heart attack. Eighteen months of mourning, and then he married again. In his personal habits he was still very much of a baby and needed someone to mother him. And fortunately his second wife, Mina Miller, proved like his first wife to be a good mother and congenial companion. It takes great patience to live with a genius. But it gives great satisfaction. Mina was able not only to appreciate his inventions but to share his thoughts. He often discussed his philosophy with her at the dinner table. He was profoundly interested in the mystery of life. He believed that every atom within the body, like the entire body itself, possesses an individual intelligence. "Look at the thousand ways in which atoms of hydrogen combine with other atoms to

form the most diverse substances. Do you mean to tell me that they do this without intelligence?"

And then he went on to clarify his thought. "Atoms in harmonious and useful combinations assume beautiful shapes and colors, or give forth a pleasant perfume. In sickness, death, decomposition or filth, the disagreement of the component atoms immediately makes itself felt by bad odors."

And the upshot of it all? The final union of the most intelligent atoms into the most intelligent substance. "Gathered together in certain forms, the atoms constitute animals of the lower orders. At last they combine in man, who represents the total intelligence of all the atoms."

"But where," asked Mina, "does all this gradual combination come from?"

"From some power greater than ourselves."

"Then you believe in an intelligent Creator?"

"I certainly do. The existence of a personal God can to my mind almost be demonstrated by chemistry."

Edison was not only a great inventor, but a constructive idealist. He was interested primarily in the things that further the plans of God. In his own experiments he aimed at the inventions that serve life, and not at those that produce death. "Making things which kill men," he once said, "is against my fiber. I would rather make people laugh."

This was the principal objective of his life—to bring laughter into the hearts of the people. More laughter and greater light. "The world has been steeped in darkness long enough."

## V

THE INVENTION of the electric light was the direct outgrowth of Edison's philosophy. And it was as simple in its conception as it was eventful in its result. It was one of those surprising discoveries of the obvious. If electricity can produce power and heat, argued Edison, there is no reason why it shouldn't produce light

—provided we can find something that will burn properly under the stimulus of heat and power. And so he began to seek a substance which, like the bush of Moses, would burn without being consumed. In this quest Edison was not alone. Many others, on both sides of the Atlantic, had thought of electric lighting. An American inventor, J. W. Starr, had worked on incandescent lamps even before Edison was born. Another American, Moses G. Farmer, had provided his sitting room with a number of crude electric lamps twenty years before Edison's invention of incandescent light. In England, in France and in Russia a number of scientists were producing equally crude lamps that would flare up for a short time and then flicker out. But Edison's chief rival in the search for the secret of practical and permanent electrical illumination was W. E. Sawyer. This American inventor had much of the brilliance but little of the patience of Edison. It was Edison who sat tirelessly in his laboratory, trying out one filament after another in his vacuum bulbs, ransacking every nook and cranny of the earth for the fiber that would give a brilliant and steady and, so far as possible, indestructible glow. And it was Edison who, refusing to admit defeat in the face of financial failure and the jeers of the scientific and journalistic world, finally discovered the magic fiber. On New Year's Eve, 1879, a throng of people from the surrounding cities had come to Edison's laboratory at Menlo Park, New Jersey. The ground of the little village was covered with snow. Suddenly, the switch of a button, and the darkness bloomed into a silver radiance under the flood of a dozen street lamps. On that New Year's Eve the genius of Edison had for the first time in history transformed night into day.

Just before the miracle had happened, a leading New York editor had exclaimed: "It has been absolutely proved that this sort of light is impossible—it is against the laws of Nature!"

## VI

EDISON has been accused of being a second-rate inventor and a first-rate businessman. He capitalized, it has been said, on the

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS AMERICANS

inventions of others. This accusation is, we believe, unfounded. It is true that others worked simultaneously with Edison on many of the inventions for which he is credited. But Edison worked harder and faster than the rest of them. And he worked under the handicap of his chronic earaches and his deafness. Indeed, he turned his handicap into an advantage. "It takes a deaf man to hear music," he remarked when he was experimenting on the phonograph. And when he was asked to explain this paradox, he said: "Most people hear only through their ears. I hear through my teeth and through my skull. Ordinarily I place my head against the phonograph. If there is some faint sound that I don't quite catch this way, I bite into the wood and I get it good and strong."

It was this faculty of hearing through his teeth and skull that enabled him to improve upon Alexander Graham Bell's invention of the telephone. Bell's instrument had been "hardly more than a mechanical curiosity," owing to the fact that it had been designed to serve both as a transmitter and a receiver. But Edison transformed it into an object of practical utility by giving it a separate mouthpiece and earpiece, instead of allowing the same tube to be used clumsily for both purposes. It sounds simple today. But it took Edison to think of it.

And many of the "simple" things that today make life worth living have had their origin in the magical laboratory of Edison's thought. Almost to the last day of his eighty-four years he worked on his experiments—an inspired, whimsical, untidy, modest, gentle, shrewd and indefatigable Merlin. Out of his sorcerer's brain came an endless stream of electrical and mechanical servants to bring new amusements and new comforts to the human race. His inventions of the phonograph, the electric light, the motion picture and the first crude "talkie" are merely the most popular of his hundreds of vital contributions to the applied science of the present day. His was perhaps the most universal mind in America during the nineteenth century. Once, when he visited Luther Burbank in his garden at Santa Rosa, the "plant wizard" asked



## THOMAS A. EDISON

him to register in his guest-book. The pages of the guest-book were divided into four columns, as follows:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Interested In</i>
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Under the caption *Interested In*, Edison wrote: "Everything." He was satisfied with nothing short of the sum of practical human knowledge.

In his endless quest for the practical, he was never satisfied with his past achievement. Always he looked toward the future. His prophetic vision saw many years ahead of the contemporary needs of his country. It is interesting to note that one of his very last experiments when death overtook him (1931) was concerned with the production of synthetic rubber.

And death itself, he was convinced, is but the transition into a new laboratory for greater experiments. "I've lived my life. I've done my work. Now I am ready for the next job."



# **THE WRIGHT BROTHERS**

*Important Dates in the Lives of the Wright Brothers*

**WILBUR WRIGHT**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1867—Born, Millville, Ind.                         | 1909—Flew from Governors Island to Grant's Tomb and back. |
| 1903—Constructed first successful airplane.        | Received gold medal from French Academy of Sciences.      |
| 1904-08—Continued successful airplane experiments. |   |
| 1908—Won Michelin Prize in France.                 | 1912—Died, Dayton, Ohio.                                  |

**ORVILLE WRIGHT**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1871—Born, Dayton, Ohio.                               | 1915—Sold his interest in Wright Aeroplane Company. |
| 1888—Finished high school education.                   | 1917—Awarded Albert Medal from Royal Society.       |
| 1903—Finished, with Wilbur, first successful airplane. | 1920—Won John Fritz Medal.                          |
| 1905—Made first long distance flight near Dayton, O.   | 1925—Received John Scott Medal.                     |
| 1909—Received gold medal from French Academy.          |   |

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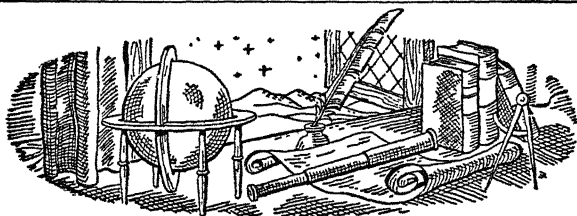
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# The Wright Brothers

*Wilbur Wright, 1867–1912*

*Orville Wright, 1871–*

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ON DECEMBER 17, 1903, Orville Wright made the first historic flight in a heavier-than-air machine. Five years later, after many successful flights witnessed by hundreds of spectators, there were a number of scientists and editors who were still unconvinced. "Human flight," wrote Professor Simon Newcomb, "is not only impossible, it is illogical." And the editor of one of America's leading magazines returned a report on an authentic flight with the following comment:

"While your manuscript has been read with much interest, it does not seem to qualify either as fact or fiction."

## II

IN SPITE of its terrible destructiveness in war the airplane, we believe, will prove to be the instrument that marks the shortest distance between human hearts. For this instrument will have succeeded more than any other in drawing the earth into a unit, in combining widely separated communities into a friendly next-door neighborliness. The airplane is the final conqueror of time and space and isolation. In 1852 it took Ezra Meeker six months

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to travel by ox-team over the Oregon Trail to Washington. In 1924 this ninety-three-year-old pioneer sped over the same distance, by airplane, in one day.

### III

FOR THOUSANDS of years the secret of air travel had eluded the ingenuity of the world's greatest scholars. Yet the magicians who finally discovered it were two uneducated bicycle mechanics. Wilbur and Orville Wright were the sons of a clergyman. Their two older brothers and their sister were college graduates. But they themselves had only a few years of schooling. Like Benjamin Franklin, Walt Whitman, Mark Twain, Thomas Edison and Henry Ford, the Wright brothers proved that a college degree is no passport to immortal achievement.

But if Wilbur and Orville Wright were no scholars, they were in the true sense of the word poets. A *poet*, by its Greek definition, is a *maker*, a *creator*, a man who transforms dreams into actualities—in short, an *inventor*. There is very little difference between the creative genius of a Shakespeare and the inventive faculty of an Edison. The one forges dead syllables into a living poem, and the other combines lifeless materials into a throbbing machine. The process is the same—the fusing of odd old bits of memory into some hitherto undiscovered aspect of the sublime.

The Wright brothers shared in this faculty of fusing old memories into new discoveries. Like Edison, they developed at an early age an almost uncanny ability for remembering details. Added to this, they both displayed a passion for mental and physical gymnastics. It was his excessive fondness for “idle” reading and for athletics that prevented Wilbur’s graduation from high school. But their reading helped them to spread the wings of their imagination. And their athletic training enabled them to come safely down to earth when they took their first ride on the bucking bronco of the air.

The two boys became interested in flight when their father

## THE WRIGHT BROTHERS

one day brought them a mechanical toy, called a *helicopter*. This "flying top" had two propellers that caused it to whizz into the air when it was wound up. The two boys took the helicopter apart, put it together, and then took it apart again, in order to discover the secret of its flight. They noticed that the propellers of this toy pushed against the air just as the paddles of a boat push against the water. Throwing the dismantled toy into a rubbish heap, they stored up in their memory the lesson that they had learned from it.

Later they watched the flight of a box kite, and then they turned to the birds. For hours they would lie on their backs, their eyes intent upon the lifting and the drifting of the wings against the sky. They noticed that some of the birds, especially the sea gulls, had a slight warp, or dip, to their wings. It was this warp, they observed, that enabled the birds to maintain their balance and to make their turns in the air. This fact, too, the boys carefully stored away in their memory for future use.

A couple of restless youngsters, with observant eyes and active minds. And fingers always on the itch to be puttering with tools. They built and sold kites for pocket money, constructed a wooden lathe with a foot-treadle and with marbles for ball-bearings, invented an improvement on a hay-baling machine, and designed an original device for folding newspapers. All this before they were out of their teens. "The boys," said their teachers, "are bright, but they are unable to concentrate on their school textbooks." True enough. Their minds were centered upon the far more important mechanical textbook of the universe.

Their thinking was almost entirely extra-curricular. They delved into the mysteries of nature. They pondered upon one of the most baffling of these mysteries—the sustaining power of the air. They began to read up on the history of man's attempts at flight. They learned about the mythical wings of Icarus, the crude experiments of Leonardo Da Vinci, the enthusiastic but fruitless efforts of Chanute, Mouillard, Ader and Lilienthal, and the scientific researches of Maxim and Langley. They noted that

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there were two schools of thought with regard to the possible conquest of the air—those who believed in the kitelike gliders, and those who experimented with the birdlike motor machines. They decided to begin their own experiments with the motorless gliders.

From the very start they found themselves handicapped. Men like Ader and Maxim and Langley had the advantage of a large working capital for their experiments. But the only capital in the possession of these two young mechanics—they had opened a bicycle shop at Dayton, Ohio—was an inexhaustible supply of enthusiasm and a daredevil willingness to take risks.

With these two assets, Orville and Wilbur set to work in the back yard of their bicycle shop, laying their “crazy” plans, and collecting homespun and rubbish for the building of their first glider. “And with this contraption,” laughed their father, “you expect to conquer the kingdom of the birds!”

The neighbors shared the good-natured ridicule of the father. So the Wright boys were planning to fly, were they? Well, it couldn't be done! Men were meant to stay down on the earth. Otherwise they'd have been given wings. And that was that!

But the Wright boys believed they could do it. They had made an intensive study of Lilienthal's papers on *The Problem of Flying* and *Practical Experiments in Soaring*. True enough, Lilienthal had been killed in a crash of his gliding machine. But before his fatal accident he had made several successful hops through the air in his glider. “What Lilienthal has done with a glider, we can do with a motor machine.”

First, however, they would begin where Lilienthal had left off—with a gliding machine. They had studied the causes of Lilienthal's failures—and these failures had been far more numerous than his successes; they had calculated the lifting and the balancing power of flat and of curved wings; they had measured, by means of a funnel which they had invented for the purpose, the pressure of the air on moving bodies; and they had reached the conclusion that the secret of aerial navigation lay in





*John D. Rockefeller*



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*Thomas A. Edison*

## THE WRIGHT BROTHERS

the proper equilibrium between the airship and the air. And thus they completed their first scientific glider—at a cost of \$15. It was a peculiar-looking object—a box kite of cloth and wooden ribs that resembled an enormous chicken coop.

In order to try out this glider, they asked the Weather Bureau at Washington to recommend a spot where they could find steady winds, low hills for take-off, and soft sand dunes for landing. Willis L. Moore, Chief of the Bureau, informed them that Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, was such a spot.

Here the two brothers took their aircraft on September 25, 1900. And here, without any fuss or witness, they began their practical experiments. At first they tried to send their glider up like a kite. It took to the air without any trouble. Their calculations had been correct. There was plenty of *lift* to the creature. Then they proceeded to the next step. Pulling their wood-and-canvas Pegasus down to earth, they prepared it for its first aerial ride with a human being upon its back. Wilbur stretched himself out on the lower wing, face down, took the controlling reins in his hands, and the next minute found himself flying through the air.

It was one of the strangest experiences within the memory of man. Wilbur Wright had set himself adrift in the Nowhere, without any roads to guide him and without any anchor under his feet. It was a terrifying moment. He grew panicky. "Let me down," he cried, "*let me down!*"

In later years, when Wilbur had become an expert pilot, he recalled this episode with a smile. The "appalling" altitude to which he had been lifted from the ground in his first flight was eight feet.

## IV

THE Wright brothers had now proved that man could *glide* through the air. But the more important question still remained unanswered. Could man *fly* through the air? For three years they experimented with motors and propellers in an effort to supply

the answer. Years of hard work and continual disappointment. At one time Wilbur was so discouraged that he was ready to give up. "Not in a thousand years will man ever learn to fly."

But Orville, the younger and the more daring of the two, kept urging his brother to go on. New wind tunnels, new airplane models with wings of various edges and curvatures, and tables upon tables of calculations and resultant figures for their subsequent tests. "Will you boys ever stop working?" asked their father, with a skeptical smile.

"Not until we have built a machine that can fly," replied Wilbur.

"And *that*," rejoined Orville, "will be only the *beginning* of our work."

See them now at their work in the back yard of their bicycle shop. Wilbur, thirty-six years old, tall and rangy, face closely shaved, firm thin lips, muscles of steel, and a steel-like glint of determination in his gray-blue eyes. Orville, thirty-two, shorter and more compact, with a heavy dark mustache that conceals the firmness of the upper lip, but with the same determined gray-blue glint in his eyes. Two dynamic machine men, their feet planted upon the ground, their hearts uplifted toward the skies.

And at last their heart's desire seemed about to be fulfilled. Toward the end of 1903 they had finished their first motorplane—the result of several years of theoretical calculation. They took it to Kitty Hawk for its practical test in the air.

But just then they received bad news. The scientific world had come to the "final conclusion" that flight in heavier-than-air machines was impossible. Professor Langley of the Smithsonian Institution had built, with the aid of government funds, an intricate and costly airplane. An imposing group of scientists had gathered on the banks of the Potomac to watch its initial flight. But it refused to fly. The dream of the ages, agreed the scientists, must remain an unattainable dream.

It was under these discouraging conditions that Wilbur and Orville prepared to make their first attempt with their modest

little "air toy." Like the Langley machine, it was equipped with propellers and a motor. But unlike the Langley machine—and this was a secret which the Wright brothers were keeping to themselves—it was built upon an entirely new principle. As a result of their persistent experimentation, the two unschooled but observant young mechanics had at last discovered the true principles of air pressure—a discovery which had eluded the mathematical calculations of all the trained scientists. Their airplane, crude and inexpensive as it was, had been designed in accordance with these newly-discovered principles. Theoretically, it ought to work. But *would* it? What business had they, a couple of bungling tinkers who hadn't even had a college education, to set themselves up against the scientific verdict of the greatest contemporary scholars? And so it was with a mingled feeling of hope and misgiving that they got ready for their take-off.

Monday, December 14, 1903. The two brothers toss a coin for the opportunity to make the first test. Wilbur wins the toss.

The test results in complete failure. The plane, after staying in the air for  $3\frac{1}{2}$  seconds, topples sideways to the ground.

Two days of repairing the broken parts, and the Wrights are ready for the next attempt. It is now Orville's turn.

December 17. The day is overcast. A raw northeaster blows in from the Atlantic half a mile away. The two pioneer airmen, their blood thinned from too much confinement in the bicycle shop, are stamping their feet and flapping their arms to keep themselves warm. They wear no overcoats, for an overcoat would hamper their movements in this dangerous experiment. As they prepare their clumsy mechanical bird for its tentative flight, they observe a flock of sea gulls soaring gracefully overhead. A raucous shriek from the gulls, as if in mocking challenge to the men below. The brothers are practically alone on the dunes. Only five spectators have taken the trouble to come from the near-by village. One of them looks from the birds to the plane and remarks with a sneer, "So *that* rigamajig is agoin' to fly?" "Sure it is," rejoins another of the spectators, "in a hundred mile tornado!"

The brothers paying no attention to the jeering remarks, tune up the motor. With a roar that drowns out the beating of the surf, the engine begins to spit fire and smoke from the open exhaust. Orville climbs into the wings. "Let her go!"

A moment of breathless expectation—the moment for which a hundred million years had been waiting. Orville grasped the controls—and then the miracle happened. The first mechanical airship began its historic flight.

## V

A YOUNG REPORTER, H. P. Moore of the Norfolk *Virginian-Pilot*, heard about the flight and set his imagination to work. He prepared a wholly fictitious story about a "long journey" through the air, at the end of which the operator of the machine ran over the ground yelling "Eureka." He sent the story to twenty-one newspapers, only three of which took the trouble to print it. When Orville learned of this incredulity on the part of the editors, he merely shrugged his shoulders and laughed. "No wonder they disbelieved the story. It was an amazing piece of work. And yet, though ninety-nine per cent wrong, it did contain one correct fact. There *had* been a flight."

But neither the editors nor the public would recognize this fact. "A couple of silly boys bucking against the eternal laws of nature." Some of their Dayton acquaintances were even sarcastic about it. "Flying and perpetual motion will come at the same time," sneered one of them. And another, "There is only one thing that could lift a machine off the ground—spirit power. And the Wright boys are not even spiritualists."

No, the Wright boys were just a couple of mischievous youngsters. Especially Orville. He had a habit of storming up the steps to his bedroom on all fours, like a child. It didn't bother him or Wilbur that the world looked skeptically upon their work. Their invention was a fascinating game, nothing more. Even in after years, when the world had come to recognize their work, they

## THE WRIGHT BROTHERS

refused to be puffed up. They had merely "piled off" a good play in their game. They retained their good-natured modesty when the colleges showered them with honorary degrees and the kings favored them with their smiles. They came both to the college presidents and to the kings dressed in their ordinary street clothes and their caps.

They felt no pompous awe in the presence of royalty and they expected the public to feel no pompous adulation in their own presence. Again and again they refused to make public speeches. "I know of only one bird, the parrot, that talks," said Wilbur, "and the parrot can't fly very high." They were careless about the medals and the ribbons which they received from scientific societies. They carried them around, together with other commonplace doodads like screws and bolts and scraps of paper, in their pockets. And they felt more chagrined when they mislaid a bolt than when they lost a medal. They possessed, in other words, the simplicity of greatness.

They never married. Their sister Katharine, who taught at the local high school, provided them with all the feminine companionship that they needed. Together with their old clergyman-father, they enjoyed that most perfect of human relationships—a harmonious family.

But suddenly the harmony was shattered. On May 30, 1912, Wilbur died of typhoid fever. He was only forty-five at the time, and his death meant the ending of one of the greatest inventive partnerships in history. Throughout their work, the two Wright brothers supplemented each other. Together they formed one supreme intellect. But apart, neither of them could accomplish much. In spite of his genius, Orville felt physically and mentally lost without his brother. And he never found himself. The invention of the airplane had come out of the interplay of their ideas. It was like a spark generated by the clashing of two swords. And when one of the two swords lay broken, the other remained inactive in its sheath. For a little while after his brother's death, Orville tried to go on. He experimented and made improvements

on the stability of the airplane. But his heart was no longer in the work. With the passing of Wilbur, Orville had grown from a boy into a man. Aviation had ceased to be a game for him. It was now a business. And Orville hated business. After three years as president of the Wright Company, he resigned.

## VI

ON DECEMBER 17, 1928, the United States celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of human flight. A monument had been erected at Kitty Hawk in honor of the Wright brothers. Orville had been invited as the principal guest. He stood beside the monument and smiled sadly at the cheering crowd. "Mighty eagle of the air!" they called him. But it was a broken eagle that stood there, with his frail gray head uncovered to the sky. His eyes roamed over the sand dunes. Drifting sands—drifting years. Past landmarks obliterated—past friendships buried. He felt suddenly cold and alone in the great crowd. His mind went back to the Ohio graveyard, where his brother lay cold and alone. Two brave eagles, equally indifferent to the jeers and the cheers of the world.



**WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN**

*Important Dates in the Life of William Jennings Bryan*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1860—Born, Salem, Illinois.                        | 1900—Again nominated for President.                    |
| 1881—Graduated, Illinois College.                  | 1901—Founded The Commoner.                             |
| 1883—Studied law at Union College, Chicago.        | 1908—Once more nominated for President.                |
| 1883-87—Practiced law at Jacksonville.             | 1913—Appointed Secretary of State by President Wilson. |
| 1887—Moved to Lincoln, Nebraska.                   | 1915—Resigned.   |
| 1890—Elected to Congress.                          | 1920—Moved to Florida.                                 |
| 1892—Reelected.                                    | 1925—Leader in famous anti-evolution trial.            |
| 1894-96—Edited Omaha World-Herald.                 | Died, Dayton, Tennessee.                               |
| 1896—Received Democratic nomination for President. |  |

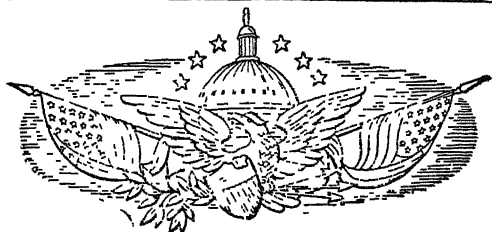
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# William Jennings Bryan

1860–1925

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I WAS BORN," wrote Bryan in the Preface to his *Memoirs*, "in the greatest of all ages . . . a member of the greatest of all races . . . a citizen of the greatest of all lands." This sentence is indicative of the two outstanding features of Bryan's character—his supreme devotion to the circle of his own horizon, and his supreme ignorance of everything that lay beyond. Bryan exerted a profound influence upon America because of his big heart. He came near to ruining that influence because of his little mind.

## II

HIS FATHER, Judge Silas Bryan, was a Baptist; his mother, Maria Elizabeth, was a Methodist. Their son, early in life, became a Presbyterian. Thus William Jennings attended Sunday School in all the three denominations.

Bryan's first ambition was to save souls; his second, to raise pumpkins. As he grew up, however, he discovered that he had a resonant voice and a mouthful of sentimental epigrams. He decided to become a politician.

A strange sort of politician—a young man who never drank,

never gambled, never swore. A speaker who always meant what he said. At fifteen he made a political speech at Centralia (Illinois). "By heck, the young fellow actually sounds sincere!" People began to listen to him and to respect him. From his freshman year at Illinois College he was regarded as a spellbinder. Having majored in the classics, he had learned to deliver his speeches in resounding metaphorical phraseology. Elected as the valedictorian of his graduating class, he chose "Character" as the subject for his oration. "Brilliant wit, pungent sarcasm, pretended earnestness—all these are as nothing to a good character." Take Napoleon, for example. This conqueror "swept like a destroying angel over almost the entire eastern world . . . leaving a path along whose length the widow's wail made music for his marching hosts . . . Talent, genius, power, these he had—character, he had none."

Good honest words—good honest delivery. "A young American Demosthenes," his classmates called him.

But there was one person who paid him an even greater compliment. Mary Elizabeth Baird, a student at Jacksonville College, called him "a young American Isaiah." She first met him "in the parlors of the school which I attended . . . His face was pale and thin; a pair of keen, dark eyes looked out from beneath heavy brows . . . a broad, thin-lipped mouth"—a heartless critic once observed that Bryan's mouth was so wide he could whisper in his own ear—"and a square chin completed the contour of his face." Her classmates, observes Miss Baird, warned her "that he was too good. But after considering the matter, I decided that I preferred marrying a man who was too good rather than one who was not quite good enough."

And now, having won Mary's heart, it was Bryan's next job to win her father's consent. He proceeded to the attack with a quiverful of Biblical quotations. "Mr. Baird," he said, "I have been reading *Proverbs* a good deal lately, and find that Solomon says, 'Whoso findeth a wife, findeth a good thing and obtaineth favor of the Lord.'"

Mr. Baird, himself somewhat of a Biblical scholar, retorted: "Yes, I believe Solomon did say that, but Paul suggests that while 'he that marrieth doeth well, he that marrieth not doeth better.' "

A telling blow, but not to young Bryan. "Mr. Baird," he said, "I believe Solomon would be the best authority upon this point. For Paul was never married, while Solomon had a number of wives."

Whereupon Mr. Baird capitulated, and the two youngsters were married. Many years later, Colonel House remarked to Bryan: "Your marriage was a great romance, wasn't it?" Bryan grinned. "Still is," he replied.

### III

BRYAN STUDIED law at Union College. His first client after his admission to the bar was—of all people!—a saloonkeeper. "I was not in sympathy with his business, but I thought those who bought liquor ought to pay for it." The bill he was hired to collect was \$2.60.

For several years he kept crawling at this snail's pace toward his goal—his total receipts for the first six months of his practice amounted to \$67.55—and then he heeded Horace Greeley's advice and went West. He settled at Lincoln, the capital city of Nebraska. Here he divided his time between legal practice, journalism and speech making. In every one of these three pursuits he proved to be a crusader. "Crusading is my business . . . Early in life God revealed to me my power over men." He dedicated this power to the overthrow of what he considered the three deadly sins of American life—rapacity, republicanism and rum. He was driven by a Messianic complex. He would set himself up as something new under the sun—a preacher in politics. He would lead the children of America out of the Wilderness of Plutocracy into the Promised Land of Democracy.

In order to find the time for his speech making, he encouraged

his wife to take up the study of law. She passed the bar and took a great proportion of his legal burdens off his shoulders. He threw himself into the political arena and within a few months delivered fifty attacks upon the Republican Governor of Nebraska.

In 1890 he received the Democratic nomination for Congress in a Republican district. It was a questionable honor for the young crusader. The older politicians had refused the nomination because of the certainty of their defeat. "Let *him* be the victim instead of *us*."

Bryan accepted his sacrificial "duty," stuffed his pockets full of radishes, a vegetable of which he was inordinately fond, and started out on a barnstorming campaign. And, to everybody's amazement, won the election.

William Jennings Bryan, said the politicians throughout the country, is a young man to be watched.

#### IV

THE FIRST SPEECH he made in Congress (March 16, 1892) dealt with the tariff. "On this question I wish to say, Mr. Chairman, that the policy of the Democratic party is not hostility to industries. We welcome to this country every industry that can stand upon its feet; but we do not welcome the industries that come to ride upon our backs." Here was a new voice against the exploitation of the weak by the strong. "These are the men who can gather around a banquet board . . . at ten dollars per plate, when within a stone's throw of their banquet hall were people to whom a ten-cent meal would be a luxury." Even the Republicans in the House nodded approval as he went on: "We cannot afford to degrade the common people of this land, for they are the people who in time of prosperity and peace produce the wealth of the country, and they are also the people who in time of war bare their breasts to a hostile fire in defense of the flag." And there were moist eyes in the audience as he concluded the

speech; "A free government must find its safety in happy and contented citizens, who, protected in their rights and free from unnecessary burdens, will be willing to die that the blessings which they enjoy may be transmitted to their posterity."

Tremendous applause from both sides of the House. "This speech," reported the *New York World*, "has been a revolution. No new member has received such an ovation in years."

Bryan was hailed as the champion of the common man, the leader of the new American democracy. He called it "the democracy of the heart."

Always he allowed his heart to guide his head. He rarely studied two sides of a question. He allowed his instinct to guide him as to which was the right side. On the issue of the "free coinage of silver"—that is, the coinage of silver into dollars at the ratio of sixteen ounces of silver to one ounce of gold—he threw himself heart and soul into the silver faction. It was a complicated subject on which many scholars differed. But Bryan was not interested in the complications of the subject. To him it was a simple matter of more dollars for more people. Hence it must have his full-hearted support. He spoke on the subject both in and out of Congress; and the more he spoke, the more intoxicated he became with his own eloquence.

Finally he hypnotized himself into the belief that on this issue he would be elected President of the United States. He began, by word of mouth and by an avalanche of letters, to solicit the support of prominent Democrats in the coming Convention (of 1896). Everybody but himself took his candidacy as a joke. One day he ran across an old friend of his, Colonel Franklin Pierce Morgan. "Frankie," he said, "I see you are to be a delegate to the Chicago (Democratic) Convention. I want you to vote for me there."

"Vote for you for what, Billy?"

"For the Presidential nomination," replied Bryan.

Recalling the incident years later, Colonel Morgan said: "I didn't make any promises to Bryan. As a matter of fact, I thought

the suggestion that he had any chance whatever to be chosen as the Presidential candidate . . . was about the most foolish thing I had ever heard."

When the Convention assembled, Bryan was listed merely as "one of the speakers." When the Convention ended, he was hailed as the leading orator of the United States. He had begun his speech upon a modest note. "It would be presumptuous indeed," he said, "to present myself against the distinguished gentlemen to whom you have listened, if this were a measuring of abilities; but this is not a contest between persons. The humblest citizen in all the land, when clad in the armor of a righteous cause, is stronger than all the hosts of error. I come to speak to you in defense of a cause as holy as the cause of liberty—the cause of humanity."

And then, "clad in the armor of his righteousness," the tall, pale champion with the bushy brows and the beagle nose trumpeted forth his message in behalf of the distressed and the dispossessed. All the panacea that the sad world needed, he declared, was the free coinage of silver. In that event there would be abundance for all. To Bryan it was just as simple as that. The great champion of humanity was silver; the great villain, gold. "If the tariff has slain its thousands, the gold standard has slain its tens of thousands." And then, in a rising crescendo of eloquence, he led up to his thundering climax:

"You come to us and tell us that the great cities are in favor of the gold standard; we reply that the great cities rest upon our broad and fertile prairies. Burn down your cities and leave our farms, and your cities will spring up again as if by magic; but destroy our farms, and the grass will grow in the streets of every city in the country.

". . . If they (our opponents) dare to come out in the open field and defend the gold standard as a good thing, we will fight them to the uttermost . . . We will answer their demand for a gold standard by saying to them: You shall not press down upon



the brow of labor this crown of thorns, you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold."

At the conclusion of this speech, the Convention "went collectively insane." Carried away by his metaphor, the delegates mistook the poet for a statesman. They hoisted him upon their shoulders, they called him an Apollo for beauty, an Orpheus for music, a Jupiter for brains. They chose him as their standard bearer—"a soul come to lead the Israelites to battle."

The spark of his oratory had touched the entire country into flame. "If the election had been held that July day," wrote William Allen White, "Bryan would have been chosen President."

But the country had three months to recover from the enchantment. Bryan was defeated and went back to his national pulpit for the regeneration of mankind.

## V

TWO YEARS after Bryan's defeat, the Spanish War broke out. Though all his life a pacifist, he enlisted and raised a regiment of which he was made colonel. He saw no active service, but he was ready to fight if necessary.

The war over, he returned to his crusading in behalf of the underdog. The great commoner, the everlasting campaigner. The Democrats selected him again as their standard bearer in 1900. In this campaign he returned once more to his one "supreme" issue. History had moved on, but Bryan remained rooted to his Sinai of Silver. His eyes were ever turned upon the "sacred tenets" of the past. He had become friendly with Colonel House, a man with a political philosophy that looked ahead. Together they discussed national problems; but Bryan's mind was closed to every subject save one. "I found . . . Mr. Bryan," writes Colonel House, "as wildly impractical as ever. I do not believe that any one ever succeeded in changing his mind upon any subject . . ." Especially upon the subject of free silver. Bryan him-

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self admitted this fact, and was proud of it. "I can say to free silver (at 16 to 1)," he wrote to Willis J. Abbot, "as Ruth said to Naomi: 'Entreat me not to leave thee, or to refrain from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.'"

His obsession was like an ingrowing toenail. It pained him so that it kept his entire mind centered upon this one sore spot. His defeat in 1900 was a foregone conclusion.

In 1904 he failed to get the nomination. At this period, however, he had established for himself a new pulpit, *The Commoner*—a weekly magazine devoted to the doctrine of free silver.

In 1908 he once more received the Presidential nomination from the Democratic Party. Again he electrified the people with his golden phrases upon the silver issue, and again he was defeated.

He took his defeats in good spirit. "Once," he told his friends, "there was a drunkard who tried to force his way into a club. The doorman pushed him gently down the steps. The drunkard tried again. This time the doorman threw him out. With infinite patience the drunkard made still another attempt, whereupon the doorman violently hurled him into the street. The drunkard got up, brushed off his clothes, and said, 'I'm on to you folks. You don't want me in there.'"

## VI

BRYAN WAS not wanted in the White House. And so, like a patient martyr, he decided to go and preach among the people. He selected the Chautauqua as his pulpit. His sermons on politics and his lectures on religion made a great hit. The people accepted him as part prophet and part circus performer. They didn't know just how to place him; for his name on the Chautau-



*Wilbur and Orville Wright*



*William Jennings Bryan*

## WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

qua programs appeared sandwiched in between the *Neapolitan Troubadours* and *Sears, the Taffy Man*. It was a pity to see the missionary turned mountebank. For his voice, however monotonous the refrain, had always been raised in behalf of the poor. And his instinct had been always on the side of justice and peace. But, as one critic observed, "he spoiled his anthems with his antics." He spoke under a glaring light, with one hand spread over a block of ice and his other hand pointing to the Promised Land.

Although he had now set himself up as a religious crusader, he took one final fling at politics. This was in the Wilson campaign of 1912. Wilson distrusted Bryan's ideas—or, rather, his *lack* of ideas. "Would," he wrote to Mr. Adrian H. Joline (April 29, 1907), "that we could do something, at once dignified and effective, to knock Mr. Bryan once for all into a cocked hat!" He realized, however, that Bryan exerted a powerful influence within his party. And so, reluctantly, he accepted his support.

And, when he was elected President, Wilson with equal reluctance appointed Bryan Secretary of State.

Bryan did not measure up to the job. His horizon was too narrow to understand anybody outside of his own country and his own faith. "He is really a fine man, full of democratic simplicity, earnest, patriotic, and of a fervently religious nature," observed Colonel House, "but he is lacking in good common sense." He allowed his sectarian fanaticism to warp his better judgment. "He was much distressed," wrote Colonel House, "when I told him that Governor Wilson had offered the Chinese mission to Dr. Charles W. Eliot (president of Harvard University). He thought it the poorest selection that could be made, for the reason that Eliot was a Unitarian."

The trouble with Secretary Bryan was that he was an evangelist instead of a statesman. He sat at his desk preparing his Chautauqua "revivals" and allowed important state documents to gather dust until he could "spare the time" to look into them. "The most confidential letter I have written," complained Walter H. Page, American ambassador to England, "was lost in

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Washington, and there is pretty good testimony that it reached the Secretary's desk."

Bryan was losing the respect of thinking people both here and abroad. The European papers, referring to his Chautauqua lectures, called him "a vaudeville actor—a circus performer—an associate of yodelers—a clown."

Yet his heart was still in the right place. He had an ardent love for brotherhood and a passionate yearning for peace. When the first World War broke out, he did everything within his power to keep America out of it. His limited horizon blinded him to the fact that America was no longer a remote and self-contained unit, but a vital part of a constantly contracting world. His idealism was superb, but it was not based upon the realism of cold fact. "I believe," he had said only a year before Germany's attack on Belgium, "there will be no war so long as I live."

Bryan was one of the first of America's isolationists. Again and again he urged Wilson to preserve a strict neutrality. "Europe's quarrel is none of our business." Finally, when Germany's utter disregard of our rights and our lives made it inevitable for us to get into the war, Bryan did the only thing possible for an honest man of his convictions. He resigned from his cabinet position. It was only after many a sleepless night that he had decided to take this step. There was a tempest of abuse in the press against what the editors regarded as his "treachery, not only to the President, but to the nation."

But Bryan had made peace with his conscience. Asked to give his favorite quotation from Shakespeare, he said: "To thine own self be true."

## VII

BRYAN NOW regarded himself, in the words of Edgar Lee Masters, as a "Christian statesman out of a job." He moved to Florida and devoted the rest of his life to the advancement of what he regarded as the "fundamentals of Christianity." In his earlier days

## WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

he had allowed his heart to guide his head. Now that he was getting older, he allowed his prejudices to guide his heart. When the prohibition amendment was passed, Bryan gave vent to his satisfaction in the following words: "Never since history began to record the doings of man have the people won at the polls such a moral victory as our nation won when the saloon was banished from the land." He took up the cudgels in behalf of the Ku Klux Klan because, as he said, to antagonize them would tend "to divide the Christian Church." And, when some of the backward-looking legislators in the United States began to oppose the teaching of evolution in the public schools, he heartily joined their ranks. Again it was a case of emotion against intellect, heart against brain. Bryan was sincere in his fight against evolution. He believed that if you accept the theory of evolution, you must reject the story of creation. His mental capacity was able to grasp the *single act*, but it was unable to follow the *eternal process*, of a creative plan. He naively asserted that you must choose "between God and Darwin." And he threw himself fanatically into the fight "in behalf of God." With the zeal of a Torquemada, he demanded the abolition of free speech in the schools. "No teacher should be allowed on the faculty of any American academy unless he is a Christian." An amazing change had come over Bryan. Back in 1901, when six professors resigned from Stanford University because of the attempt of Senator Stanford's widow to curb their academic freedom, Bryan had written: "It is a good sign when the teacher rebels and surrenders his salary in preference to surrendering his principles." But now, in 1925, he traveled from state to state urging the various legislatures to pass laws that would make the teaching of evolution a crime. A few states, including Tennessee, passed such laws. A Tennessee instructor of biology, John Scopes by name, was arrested for discussing evolution in violation of the law. Bryan undertook to be one of the counsel for the prosecution. The chief counsel for the defense was the famous attorney, Clarence Darrow.

The trial—the reporters had dubbed it the "monkey trial"—

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turned out to be a farce; and the principal victim of the farce was not the prisoner but the prosecutor. Darrow put Bryan through a grueling cross examination. It was a spectacle more painful than ludicrous.

*Darrow:* Do you believe, Mr. Bryan, that God made a fish big enough to swallow Jonah?

*Bryan:* Yes, sir.

*Darrow:* Do you believe that all the living things that were not contained in Noah's Ark (during the flood) were destroyed?

*Bryan:* I think the fish may have lived . . . What I say about the fish is merely a matter of humor.

*Darrow:* Do you think the sun was made on the fourth day (of creation)?

*Bryan:* Yes.

*Darrow:* And they had evening and morning (on the first three days) without the sun?

*Bryan:* I believe in creation as told in the Bible; and if I am not able to explain it, I will accept it.

Finally, when Darrow pointed out the necessity of every human being to increase his knowledge and to use his mind, Bryan significantly remarked: "I have all the information I want to live by and to die by."

The trial ended, as everybody had expected, in a conviction against the defendant. Indeed, Darrow had asked for it. There was no question that Scopes had deliberately violated the law in his teaching of evolution. Scopes had offered himself as a willing martyr in order to demonstrate the stupidity of that particular law. And his martyrdom was successful and comparatively light.

But *Bryan's* martyrdom was a heavy and pathetic failure. Scopes forfeited a fine of \$100. Bryan forfeited the respect of the entire civilized world.

And, in addition to that, he laid down his life. The exertion and the humiliation of the trial had proved too much for him. He died only five days after it was ended.



VIII

BRYAN HAD DIED in eclipse. The sensation of the trial had blinded the public to his earlier achievement. It is so easy to remember our neighbor's disgrace, so easy to forget his noble deeds. In our estimate of the littleness of Bryan's mind, let us not overlook the greatness of his heart. With all his faults, Bryan had his political vision focused in the right direction. He was one of the all-too-infrequent public men who tried to make America a happier place for the common man to live in.



**OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES**

*Important Dates in the Life of Oliver Wendell Holmes*

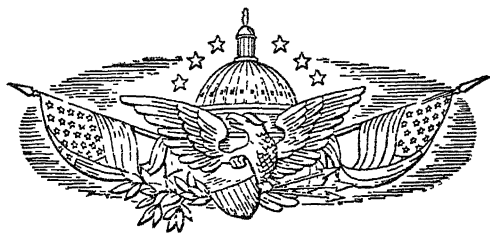
- |  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| 1841—Born, Boston, Mass.                             | 1899—Became chief justice of     |
| 1861-64—Served in the Civil War.                     | Supreme Court of Massachusetts.  |
| 1866—Graduated, Harvard Law School.                  | 1902—Appointed member of         |
| 1870-73—Edited the American Law Review.              | Supreme Court of United States.  |
| 1872—Married Fanny Dixwell.                          | 1929—Lost his wife.              |
| 1882—Became professor at Harvard Law School.         | 1932—Retired from Supreme Court. |
| Appointed justice of Supreme Court of Massachusetts. | 1935—Died, Washington, D. C.     |

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# Oliver Wendell Holmes

1841—1935

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**O**LIVER HOLMES the boy was a mixture of all that was New England. Wendell the youth absorbed all that was America in the period of her transition. When he reached manhood, these qualities had blended into a well rounded being—a man of wisdom and honesty and a passionate love for fair play. American to the core—Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, the great dissenter.

Quiet and reserved, Wendell might well have been thought shy. In a family dominated by the elder Holmes, loquacious Autocrat of the Breakfast Table, young Wendell's reticence was particularly noticeable. Amid the chattering, bustling women of the family, Wendell's slow smile and deliberate speech produced upon the newcomer the impression of aloofness. A glance at the alert eyes, however, would have revealed the keen intellectual fire that burned behind the calm exterior. As he winced at his father's dreadful puns, he gave people the impression that he was lacking in humor. And as he listened, sometimes ungraciously, to the Doctor's too oft repeated anecdotes, he acquired a reputation for being supercilious. Yet his mind was developing a sense of humor richer and more kindly than that of the father under whose shadow he reached adulthood and under whose

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disapproval his own personality remained for a number of years subdued.

At sixteen, when he entered Harvard, Wendell towered physically above the Autocrat. With a slightly guilty feeling he admitted to himself that he enjoyed being away from home. With a shock of unruly hair, a gentle manner, and a pair of dreamy eyes, Wendell possessed a romantic charm that caused young feminine heads to turn, and young feminine hearts to flutter. He was unaware of the stir he created; and though he called on many young ladies, he felt no interest other than friendship for any of them. Avoiding the homes where he would be welcomed as his father's son, he became a part of the gay younger set of Boston. While Wendell Senior berated the lack of competitive sports at Harvard, Wendell Junior pursued sports of the non-competitive type. Skating for hours with a group of students, he would repair afterward to some tavern, to consume quantities of beer and oysters. Then, late into the night, a few kindred souls would revel in an orgy of intellectual shuttlecock—tossing some obscure theory back and forth until they had worn it into nonexistence.

As Wendell's tastes and personality matured, the breach between father and son widened. He was embarrassed by his father's crusading—it seemed that nothing was sacred to the Doctor; he found his fishing for praise a trifle vulgar, his self admiration distasteful. He turned to his Uncle John for advice. Uncle John smiled tolerantly. "You will get used to your father, Wendell. I did."

Wendell was not a brilliant student. He acquitted himself tolerably well, and he liked his studies; but thus far he had not given himself wholly to scholarship. The subject that might really interest him had not as yet presented itself. His restless, inquiring mind ached for some outlet that would challenge his intellect to the fullness of its capacity. Science and language he examined and dismissed. Law, he decided, was the field in which his ability would be put to the test. And yet, as an undergraduate, he felt

no compelling urge even in that direction. Unable to understand his son's mind and its needs, the Doctor viewed his "laziness" with increasing irritation. Wendell had become practically inarticulate under his father's continual nagging. Spending as much time away from home as possible, he was scorned as an outsider, a disgrace to the Holmes tradition. He took to tiptoeing softly down the back stairs, in order to avoid an answer to his father's "Where are you going, Wendell?" followed by some derogatory remark.

## II

WENDELL READ voraciously, particularly in the field of philosophy; but his reading lacked direction. It was an unforeseen incident that supplied the impetus for which he had been seeking. Somewhat shocked by the fact that his fellow students read only for the sake of saying they were "on speaking terms" with a renowned author, he wrote an article for the college paper: "Read for Ideas, not for Authors." The article stimulated much comment, and brought him a barrage of books at Christmas time. Everybody sought to make Wendell's yuletide complete with a feast of print. Among the gifts was Plato's *Republic*. He read and liked much of what Plato said. But there was a great deal that he found to quarrel with. Writing an essay in which he debated many of Plato's theories, he took it to his friend, Emerson, for comment. Sitting tensely on the edge of a chair, he waited for the verdict of the Sage of Concord. Emerson handed back the manuscript, shaking his head slowly. "When you shoot at a king, you must kill him," he said. Wendell understood the cryptic sentence. He had been skimming over the surface of things intellectual. Tearing the manuscript into shreds, he applied himself to his studies with all the energy at his command. The floodgates were down, the incentive had won. His aim now was to pursue a theory to its very source, to prove it either false or true. Night after night, often until dawn dimmed the lamplight, Wendell

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plunged into the depths of philosophy. To the exclusion of all else, he gave himself up to the scholar's life. He grew gaunt and absent-minded, but completely alive at last.

With all the intellectual food that Wendell absorbed, he was generating energy which needed an outlet. He found the outlet in the *Harvard Magazine*. Appointed editor of this paper, he used its pages as the testing ground for his ideas. His self esteem began to rise. A slight pompousness marked his discourse—somewhat to the amusement of Fanny Dixwell, daughter of one of his former teachers. Fanny's sprightly wit and penetrating mind stimulated and charmed him. Amid the acclamations that now began to pour in on him, Fanny's criticism was refreshing. When Wendell received the coveted undergraduate prize for writing, Fanny's slender fingers pricked the bubble that threatened to carry him away. Wendell came down to earth. His article was brilliant, she said, but the author was inclined to be superficial and self satisfied. This rebuke delighted him, and he found Fanny more enchanting than ever. "You attack a man's vanity like a she-wolf," he laughed. "You are a witch. And something in that gray-green eye of yours tells me you were born on a Friday night, with the moon at the quarter."

Wendell continued to seek her out, to have his cloud castle anchored to the earth. He failed to notice that a sadness was creeping into the green eyes, a gauntness attacking the smooth cheek. That Fanny was desperately in love with him, never occurred to Wendell. That the witch longed to mother him, to make a home and surround him with affectionate encouragement—these were thoughts that never entered the realm of pure intellect in which he was dwelling.

Outside pressures were at work, forces that were to shatter the small contented world that Wendell had built for himself. North Carolina had seceded from the Union. President Lincoln had sent a call for men to rally to the Union Standard. Wendell recalled some of the scenes of his childhood, when escaped slaves had sought haven in Boston—the riots, the bonfires, the sight of



black men chained and put aboard a vessel to be returned to their owners. These memories stirred up a restlessness in his mind. The recurring pictures obtruded themselves before the pages to which he had been so passionately devoted. A greater passion took hold of him. Wendell joined the Fourth Battalion of the New England Guard. In blue Zouave trousers and red cap, he looked more romantic than ever. He applied for a three-year commission; and while waiting for this commission, he was graduated from Harvard. At Commencement he read an original poem. Attending the exercises, the Doctor for once took a back seat, listening while his son held the center of the stage.

That evening, young Wendell strolled over the college grounds and watched the dancing. Seeing Fanny in the arms of a graduate, and moved by her grace, he plucked a rose and tossed it to her. Fanny's heart leaped at this first token of his interest. But there was no sequence to the gesture, and Lieutenant Holmes departed for the wars—leaving Fanny to grow a little thinner, a shade less sprightly as the months dragged on.

### III

WITH OTHER VOLUNTEERS, the young Lieutenant chafed at the enforced inactivity which kept him in Massachusetts during his training period. And again in Virginia he fretted, longing for actual combat. When it did come, it was like a thunderbolt. Surprised by the enemy at Ball's Bluff, his outfit suffered heavy losses and inglorious defeat. Wendell's part in the battle was short and tragic. In the first five minutes of fighting a bullet pierced his chest, barely missing his lungs and heart. Invalided home, Wendell was morose. He resented the ministrations of the doctors, and refused to talk. The days of suffering amongst the sick and the near dead had left their mark. Only to Fanny could he open his heart. Her clear mind and realistic viewpoint brought him gradually back to the world.

Restored again to health, and the possessor of a Captain's

commission, Wendell was ordered back to Virginia. Months of guerilla warfare, stalking unseen enemies through swamp and forest. Half-starved, ragged, sleepless men dragging out a nightmare existence. At times Wendell was not sure that he actually lived. The horrors of the campaign stood out as something apart from himself, while he moved as an automaton through the ghastly days and nights. It seemed to be Wendell's fate never to participate fully in a battle. At the very next open contact with the foe, a bullet through his neck brought quick oblivion. As he lay among the wounded on the field, the surgeons refused to treat him. They considered him too far beyond help. It was only the persistence of a friend, aided by a farmer's boy, that saved Captain Holmes. Together they carried him to a farmhouse and insisted on his receiving treatment before his life gave out.

Once more in Boston, in the neat white bed, Wendell's lips were forever sealed upon the horror he had witnessed. Not even Fanny could reach him now. To visitors he had but one comment. "War is an organized bore," he said. True to form, Doctor Holmes had written an article in which he described his search for his son among the wounded. His photographic mind had reconstructed in minute detail the after-battle scenes. Wendell fumed inwardly at this indignity, making apology to his soldier friends. Most of all he resented the fact that his father had pictured him as a hero. He felt very far from heroic, and he knew that his companions in arms would feel a like resentment at their being paraded before the public view. Back with his regiment once more, Wendell kept his troubles and his thoughts to himself. The Doctor's hurt was sore. Wendell never wrote to him. The rift between father and son had widened, past all bridging.

A Lieutenant Colonel now, Wendell had the bearing of an officer. His voice had gained that authority which causes men to obey instinctively. At Alexandria, on the eve of a decisive battle, President Lincoln stood viewing the field, a tempting target. "Get down, you fool!" Wendell shouted. The President threw himself down without a moment's delay. Later he congratulated

Wendell. "I'm glad you know how to talk to a civilian," he said, a smile playing about the thin lips.

His three-year enlistment over, Wendell wandered disconsolately about the house. Now he could return to his studies, devoting himself to the law. But did he really want to? He felt no great urge; and to return to the classroom after the smoke of the battlefield seemed remote and somewhat childish. To his father he said definitely that he had decided on the law school. "It's no use," the Doctor replied. "A lawyer can never be a great man." But Wendell's mind was made up. If being a lawyer precluded the possibility of being a great man in the Doctor's eyes, Wendell would be a lawyer. Turning on his heel, he strode over to the Registrar's office.

## IV

LAW, as taught at the time, proved to be a dull study for Wendell. The courses were inadequate, and not at all stimulating. But the teachers themselves were an inspiration. Men were so much more alive than books. Men, and places. With the approach of the summer vacation, Wendell decided to take a trip to England. He talked to Fanny of the proposed journey. She listened quietly, and hoped that England would not change him. Puzzling remark; Wendell repeated it to the assembled family. His young brother Neddy and his mother eyed him quizzically. "You are most undiscerning where Fanny is concerned," Neddy said.

Wendell was apprehensive as to his reception in England. The Englishmen's reserve and their belief that all Americans were half savage made him somewhat unsure of himself. At his first large dinner party in London he was seated near a general. The general fixed him with a cold eye, and asked in his most British manner: "Can you train your men to fight in a line?" Wendell smiled pleasantly. "Why, General," he replied, "you can train monkeys to fight in a line." From that moment his social success was assured.

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS AMERICANS

It was with a new vigor that Wendell, upon his return, took up life in Boston. He found New England, and especially his family, rather provincial after the continent. But the provincialism was comfortable, and full of good will. For the first time Wendell enjoyed the bustling atmosphere of his home. Even the Doctor no longer irritated him. Wendell had gained in poise, and could out-talk his father, could even poke sly fun at the Doctor's repetitiousness.

Wendell received his degree and in due course, on a rainy Monday morning, was sworn in to the Bar. To his father's disparaging remarks he replied calmly, "To know is not less than to feel." Thus far to Wendell the object of life was to know—he had not yet begun to feel. And he found plenty of time in which to extend his knowledge. Though he attended the office regularly, he worked little at his profession. There were few clients; and his interest lay not in the practice of law, but in the theory and history of jurisprudence. He plunged into a treatise on the Common Law, isolating himself more and more from his fellow men. He neglected even his most intimate friends, seeing hardly anyone but Fanny and Uncle John. Fanny scolded him for his failure to write to his closest friend, William James, then desperately ill. Wendell replied that he did not have sufficient facts to answer some abstract theory that James had propounded. Fanny turned impatiently to Uncle John. "Has your nephew, all his life, professed to care more for ideas than he cares for people?" she asked. The significance of her question passed over his head, and he continued to bury himself ever deeper in Kent's *Commentaries*—a work he had undertaken to bring up to date. Living in a world of his own fabrication, Wendell lost contact with the real world. Opinionated and didactic, he alienated all but his most intimate acquaintances. Invited to deliver a series of twelve lectures at Harvard, he strode about the halls and the grounds with the air of the president himself. So absorbed in his work had he become that he always carried his manuscript with him. Not even in the lavatory or at the dinner table would he be without his



*Oliver Wendell Holmes*



*Will Rogers*

precious brief case. Wound up tight like a spring, he grew thin and pale. Nor did he hear the jokes that were made at the expense of the ever present brief case.

A change in the family status suddenly jerked Wendell out of his self sufficient world. Two weddings—his brother Neddy and his sister Amelia. Without them the house had become lonely and still. Fanny, who no longer had the excuse of visiting Amelia, came no more. And Wendell missed her. One Sunday Uncle John insisted that Wendell come with him to the Dixwells for tea. Wendell looked at Fanny wistfully. "I have not seen you for a whole week," he said.

"A week, Wendell? It is three weeks."

Uncle John took Wendell into another room and spoke to him sternly. Didn't he realize that Fanny was desperately in love with him? That they were both nearly thirty? That Fanny was pining into illness? Wendell, shocked, could not answer. For hours that night he paced the floor of his room. And then he strode, distracted, about the dark streets. When he returned home, his mind was made up. He would ask Fanny to be his wife. They were married a few weeks later.

The young couple occupied the third floor of the family home on Beacon Street. Laughter and gaiety returned with Fanny's coming. And, for Wendell, a new sense of comfort. Fanny's un-failing tact smoothed over many a rough scene between father and son. Yet husband and wife both realized that there could be no permanent harmony between the two clashing personalities, and that a home of their own was imperative. At the first possible moment, therefore, they left the parental roof and started house-keeping in a small flat over a drug store. An unpretentious and somewhat inconvenient home—but to the young couple, nothing short of Paradise.

With the new contentment, a greater capacity for work came to Wendell. Pleasantly the fruitful years slipped away, and more and more Wendell came to be accepted as an intellect to be reckoned with. Recognition in the world, peace within the house-

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS AMERICANS

hold. In each other's presence, the Holmeses found completion. To Wendell, Fanny was perfection itself. To Fanny, the world revolved around one focal point—Wendell.

### V

WENDELL'S fortieth birthday—and the publication of his book, *Common Law*. Their friends celebrated the double event with champagne. Feeling that the occasion demanded a special gesture, Wendell kept the champagne cork as a memento, remarking: "The only reward which I have promised myself is that a few men will say, *well done*." His reward was greater than he had hoped. Not only in America, but in England as well, the reviewers heaped lavish praise upon his book.

As though forty had been a turning point, he now began to harvest the fruits of his long years of labor. He was appointed to a professorship at Harvard under the progressive President Eliot. Wendell enjoyed his work, introducing a new method of instruction to replace the old. Instead of lecturing to the students, he encouraged them to discuss their subject. The students responded to the stimulating system, and they adored Professor Holmes. His life seemed to have been set in an enduring pattern now, and he was content. He pictured himself as spending the rest of his days in quiet routine. But three months saw the termination of his professorship. In December there occurred a vacancy in the Supreme Court of Massachusetts, and Wendell was offered the appointment. With one hour in which to decide the course of his future life, Wendell took advantage of the resignation clause in his Harvard contract. From Professor Holmes to Justice Holmes.

It was an auspicious moment for the youngest judge to take his seat. America was growing, industry was expanding, trusts were being formed, and labor disputes were bringing restlessness to the country. It was a time when law was emerging from the disrespect with which it had been viewed. America was busy with



## OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

the shaping of a new civilization. Men of vision were needed at the helm—jurists like Oliver Wendell Holmes. He argued that law was not precedent—a doctrine that shocked many of the old-school lawyers—but a developing process of history. "The Constitution is an experiment," he said, "as all life is an experiment."

The Holmeses no longer lived in the rooms above the drug store. There was a house now near the river, with a cook and a maid in attendance. Fanny kept the place filled with birds, which she fed and scolded constantly. In Wendell's eyes the years had but added to her perfection. Wendell often lingered late to watch her at her tasks.

"Wendell, you will be late for court," Fanny oftentimes admonished him.

"I want to watch you feed the birds first," Wendell replied.

Wendell had developed into an accomplished public speaker; he was in demand everywhere. He could chuckle now at his father's prediction. "Wendell will never be a speaker," the Doctor had said. "His neck is too thin."

In addition to his work in the Chambers, Wendell had many other duties. Riding circuit, he was away from home for weeks at a time. He worked so hard that Fanny grew afraid for his health. But always she sensed the point where he had reached the end of his strength. Interrupting with some amusing story, she brought a smile and relaxation to Wendell.

And then—an interruption to their happiness. Death. At the passing of the elder Mrs. Holmes, it was necessary for one of the children to return and live with the father. This Amelia did, much to the relief of Wendell and Fanny. But shortly after her arrival Amelia died suddenly, and the young Holmeses faced the inevitable. They must go and care for the aged Autocrat. Wendell watched sadly, as his wife bustled about packing. "Fanny, you will take your birds with you, of course," he said quietly. Fanny nodded.

Once more under the Doctor's roof, Fanny bled inwardly to see

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS AMERICANS

all the dignity and assurance slip from Wendell's shoulders. Once more he had become the awkward, almost surly boy. When the older man died quietly, sitting in a chair, it was with relief that Fanny saw Wendell's shoulders straighten, heard him laugh again.

Wendell was keeping up with the world. Doggedly he rode the newfangled two-wheel bicycle through the streets of Boston. With great persistence he learned to steer with one hand, the other free to wave at passing acquaintances. Justice Holmes startled staid Boston in other ways. In a public address he spoke of his city as "this smug, oversafe corner of the world . . ." Boston gasped. But these, and other words of Wendell's, reached the White House where Theodore Roosevelt was busy deflating stuffed shirts and warring on trusts. An invitation to the Supreme Court of the United States, and for the first time in his life Wendell was afraid. Inwardly as apprehensive as her husband, Fanny urged acceptance. "We shall have to dine with the President, in tails and white satin, Fanny," he protested. Fanny turned to her Japanese Robin. "The Judge is frightened, Koko," she confided. Wendell accepted.

Their first White House dinner was in honor of the new Justice. They entered timidly. But their timidity was not long lived. Roosevelt at once took Fanny under his wing. "How do you like Washington?" he asked.

"Washington," Fanny replied, "is full of famous men, and the women they married when they were young." The President's roar of laughter caused all heads to turn. Watching her, Wendell was proud and happy. Both of them, he realized, fitted easily into the life of the Capital. They were more at home here than they had been in the conventional confines of Boston. Wendell entered into the brilliant life of Washington with the zest of a school boy, enjoying at long last the youth which he had never had.

Life was widening in many ways as Wendell's youthfulness increased with his years. The house was always full of young people, aglow with life and laughter until the early morning

hours. His secretaries were numerous. Every year the pick of the Harvard graduating class was sent to him. Calling them *Idiot*, and *Sonny Boy*, Wendell taught them not only what he knew of law, but also what he knew of history and philosophy. "Holmes's Annuals," Washington called them. Dawn often found the I Street house still echoing to the sounds of discussion under the animated leadership of Justice Holmes. Whenever he came home to find some argument in progress, he would inquire joyfully, "What is it? I will take the opposite view." And, as the discussion progressed, Fanny served as the gracious hostess to them all.

Wendell did not care for the reputation he gained as dissenter. But for the truth as he saw it he must fight; he could not do otherwise. Free speech was one of the rights granted us in our Constitution, and that right he must defend—no matter against what power and at what price. The Supreme Court of America must be a reflection of the Supreme Law of God.

Eighty now, and his enjoyment of living keener than ever. Of course there would be a birthday party as always. But the house was dark. The cook, Fanny said, was sick, and they must celebrate at a hotel. Grumbling, Wendell dressed. Prohibition was in full swing. The prospect of a dry birthday was not alluring, but better than nothing at all. "Child of Hell, Black Satan, where are my cigars?" he roared at the houseboy, who answered with a grin. The dining-room doors were flung open. Lights, laughter and a half score of his secretaries greeted him. Wendell smiled. "I knew that she-devil was up to something," he said smiling at Fanny. And there was champagne. "Close the shutters," Wendell commanded. "My father always said I would die a drunkard."

The years had slipped quietly away. Fanny was dead. Somehow, Wendell kept on. For six years he had visited the grave regularly, first placing flowers at the foot of the stone, then walking wordlessly around, tapping it gently. Wendell's legs were weak, his step was slow, but he had not missed a day on the bench. His decisions were still as quick and penetrating as ever.

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS AMERICANS

He was still impatient with the long-winded oldsters, for his point of view was always focused along with the younger men. Every year the papers asked when Justice Holmes would retire. "I shall not retire," he answered, "until the Almighty Himself requests it."

Ninety—and the nation toasted one of its favorites. But he missed the most lovable toast of them all—the voice that would have teased: "Wendell, I see by the papers that you are almost as famous as your father."

Next day a cheer swept the continent as Justice Holmes again took his seat. But the years had begun to claim their own. In the mornings Wendell was as keen as ever—*alert* was the phrase he liked to apply to himself. But the afternoons brought a heaviness he could not fight off. Justice Holmes sat with his forehead against his fingertips, in the attitude of *The Thinker*, resting. A day came when he dozed off completely. Justice Hughes tapped his leg. Wendell's head jerked up. Later he dozed again. When court adjourned at four-thirty, he walked over to the clerk's desk. "I won't be down tomorrow," he said quietly. That night he wrote his resignation to the President, beginning: "The time has come, and I bow to the inevitable."

Several more years of useful thinking. Franklin Roosevelt visited him one day and found him reading Plato. "Why Plato?" he asked. "To improve my mind, Mr. President," Wendell answered. But the time was approaching when once again he must bow to the inevitable. "Why should I fear death?" he remarked to his secretary. "When he comes, he will look like an old friend." A chill, which quickly developed into pneumonia, and the nation knew that his days were numbered. "To have done what lay in you to do, to say that you have lived, and to be ready for the end," he said. He waited calmly. When an oxygen tent was placed above him, he said: "A lot of damfoolery."

At two o'clock in the morning, March 4, 1935, Justice Holmes greeted death quietly. Ninety-four years young.

**WILL ROGERS**

### *Important Dates in the Life of Will Rogers*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1879—Born, Oologah, Indian Territory (later Oklahoma).                       | 1903—Worked in a circus, in Australia.                               |
| 1889—Lost mother.  | 1904—Returned to America. Became vaudeville "cowhand."               |
| 1893—Recognized as top-notch cowhand and steer-roper.                        | 1906—Met Fred Stone.   |
| 1897—Entered Kemper Military Academy.  | 1908—Married Betty Blake.  |
| 1898—Ran away from Kemper Academy. Got job as cowhand at Ewing Ranch, Texas. | 1911—Lost father.  |
| 1899—Won steer-roping prize at Claremore.                                    | 1914—Joined Ziegfeld Follies.  |
| 1902—Went to South America; and from there, to South Africa.                 | 1919-22—Acted in silent pictures.                                    |
|  | 1922—Began to write for McNaught Syndicate. Started on lecture tour. |
|  | 1934—Voted most popular screen actor.                                |
|  | 1935—Killed in airplane accident, Alaska.                            |

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# Will Rogers

1879—1935

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WILL ROGERS WAS one-eighth Cherokee Indian—and proud of the fact. One day he was delivering a lecture at the citadel of blue-blooded Americanism, the Boston Symphony Hall. “I am honored,” he began in his western drawl, “by the presence of so many descendants of the pioneer Americans. My own forefathers, I gotta confess, didn’t come over like yours on the *Mayflower*. But,” he added with a chuckle, “they met the boat.”

## II

TWO PECULIAR LEGENDS have grown up around the name of Will Rogers: the first, that he was an illiterate cowpuncher who paraded as a philosopher; the second, that he was an Oxford graduate who masqueraded as a clown. Neither of these two legends is true. Will Rogers was the fairly well-educated son of an Oklahoma ranchman and banker. He could have had a college education if he had wanted it. But he was too restless a spirit to sit in the stuffy classroom of the academy. He preferred to roam at large in the wider academy of the open road. In everything he thought and said, in his profound observations as well

as in his careless speech, he was always frankly and absolutely himself. This was the keynote to his greatness. His words were the perfect mirror of his heart.

Yet it took the world, it took even his own family, a long time to recognize him for what he was. As a child, Will Rogers was a disappointment to his parents. "Doesn't like his school. Plays truant every other day. It must be the Indian in him." Like his father, he was a good horseman. But it was not as a horseman that his father wanted to bring him up. "I've done enough riding for the whole family. I want *you* to grow up into an educated man."

In his effort to educate his boy, Clem Rogers—affectionately known in the neighborhood as "Uncle Clem"—sent Willie (of all places!) to a girls' school. Here an effort was made to have Willie "genteled" not only in the three R's, but in painting and in music as well. "I was doing nicely at the piano," he wrote years later, "until an angry teacher slapped me off the stool."

And now there came a tragedy into his life, the death of his mother. And a change from a girls' into a boys' school. But there was no change in Will's distaste for academic learning. From one school to another he was hustled, in the hope that somewhere along the line he would "perk up" and begin to study. In vain. "The boy is untidy, impetuous, and a spoiled brat." From some of the schools he was taken away at his own request; from others, at the request of his teachers. "The trouble with Willie," said one of his teachers, "is that his mind is too idle while his hands are too busy." He was too fond of playing with the lariat. He roped everything in sight—desks, tables, chairs, cats, dogs, boys on the way to and from school. "How I wish I could rope the headmaster!" This he didn't quite dare, but one day he dared the next thing to it. He roped the headmaster's colt. Unfortunately, however, Willie let go of the lasso. The frightened colt, with the rope dangling from its neck, bolted across the campus and disappeared beyond the limits of the town. "The headmaster," writes Betty Rogers in the story of her



husband's life, "decided then that maybe Willie couldn't do without his lariat, but that the school could do without Willie."

His father, in the hope that a stricter discipline would be good for Willie, sent him to the Kemper Military Academy (1897). Here the young "loafer" received the highest mark for elocution—"he's such a good mimic"—and a less than average grade for scholastic attainment. Not that his mind was slow—indeed, he could memorize his lessons faster than anybody else in the school. But he was such a clown when he stood up to recite. His slouchy manner, the lift of his eyebrow, the shrug of his shoulders, the grin upon his face—all these "antics" would disrupt the class before he opened his mouth. "Sit down!" the exasperated teacher would cry and give him a "failure" mark.

Two years at the academy was all he could stand. Summarizing his entire school career, Will Rogers wrote with comic exaggeration: "I spent ten years in the fourth grade and knew more about McGuffey's Fourth Reader than McGuffey did."

But he had developed into a fine athlete—he had played baseball and football at Kemper—he could now ride and rope almost as well as his father, and he felt an insatiable urge to shut his books and to open the world. And so, after two years at Kemper, he borrowed thirty dollars from his three sisters, bought himself a "spooky old" horse, and set off on a ghost ride to the cow country of Amarillo, Texas.

Here he got his first job as a cowboy. "We helped drive a herd to Western Kansas . . . No greater, no happier life in the world . . . That was the prettiest country I ever saw in my life, flat as a beauty contest winner's stomach, and prairie lakes scattered all over it. And mirages! You could see anything in the world—just ahead of you."

And this, from now on, was to be the restless adventure of his life—to be always on the trail, seeking out the mirages of the world, and interpreting their false but none the less fascinating allure to his fellow men. A strange phenomenon in history—a philosopher on horseback.

## III

IN BETWEEN ADVENTURES Will Rogers met Betty Blake. Strangely enough, she lived in a town named Rogers (Arkansas). On a visit to her sister in Oologah, Oklahoma, she met this "lithe, shy little fellow" who looked so little like a cowpuncher. They were having supper at the house of a mutual friend. "Will was awkward and very still during supper, but later . . . he thawed out and began to sing . . . He had a high tenor voice . . . I remember my delight as he sang song after song . . ."

She returned to her home in Arkansas. A few weeks later, she received a letter from Will. "No doubt you will be madly surprised on receipt of this epistle but never the less I could not resist the temptation . . . Hoping you will take pity on this poor heart broken Cow pealer and having him rejoicing over these bold prairies on receipt of a few words from you I remain your True Friend and Injun Cowboy."

An exchange of letters—the early sunrise flushes of a bashful love—and Will suddenly left on a pilgrimage that was to take him around the globe. His first objective was the Argentine, a place which he had heard was good "cow country." He got to that country in a blundering, roundabout way—from Oklahoma to New Orleans, from New Orleans to Galveston, from Galveston to New York, from New York to Liverpool, from Liverpool to Buenos Aires.

Arrived in the Argentine, he became intimate with two unwholesome companions—hunger and disillusion. "The workers here get about \$5 a month . . . and have to live like dogs." And even this dog-life was denied to him for a time. He was reduced to sleeping in the park and going without meals before he got a job on a South American ranch.

But he couldn't stay put. Too eager to go on with the business of learning through living. On to the next page in the open book of the world. He shipped as a cattle tender on a boat that sailed for South Africa with a cargo of live stock.

## WILL ROGERS

It was in South Africa that he caught up with his destiny for the first time. He got a job in the show business—the place where he naturally belonged. “I was hired to do roping in Texas Jack’s Wild West Circus.” This circus was touring the South African cities. “We generally stay in a town two or three days . . . I am called ‘The Cherokee Kid’ on the program.”

A kid, the adoration of all the other kids. “The matinee is especially for children and is always crowded . . . I am their ideal.”

And so he traveled over South Africa, delighting his audiences—“this fellow can lasso the tail off a blowfly”—depositing good will wherever he went, and waiting for the chance to return to America.

This chance came by way of Australia, where he joined the circus of the Wirth Brothers as “the champion trick rough rider and lasso thrower of the world.” From Australia to New Zealand—“don’t get excited when you look on the map and see where I am now”—and then back to America. He had been gone for two years. “I started out first class. Then I traveled second class, then third class. And when I was companion to the she cows, was what might be called no class at all.” He came back empty-handed—he had lost all his savings to professional gamblers in a card game. But he was rich in experience. “I would not take a fortune for my trip.”

His father now urged him to settle down to the “respectable” business of ranching. But Will refused. The show business had got into his blood. Uncle Clem gave him up in disgust. “No boy who wastes his time in the circus will ever amount to anything.”

And thus, too, believed Betty Blake. “I had a wide streak of conventionality in me,” she writes, “and I was not particularly thrilled about Will’s profession.”

But when he proposed to her, she accepted—on condition that he would give up the theater.

A brief honeymoon, plans to settle down in Oklahoma, the theft of their presents and their savings in Butte, Montana—and

then there came an offer to play the Percy Williams vaudeville circuit at \$300 a week. This time even Betty was willing to accept the offer. Will Rogers was wedded to the stage for life.

## IV

THERE WAS a new feature now in his act—a running patter of observations as he rode around the stage and roped his animals. It was by accident that he had hit upon his added feature. One day a friend suggested that it might be a good idea for him to announce the most difficult catch of his act. Will did so, and the audience laughed. He was furious. “So they made fun of me, did they?”

“Why, no,” said the manager after the show. “They thought you were grand. A laugh is the best thing you can get out of an audience.”

Will tried it again. It worked. Once he tried to jump with both feet inside a spinning rope. He missed. “Well,” he drawled to the audience, “got all my feet through but one.” It brought the house down. From that day on, Will kept his tongue busy on the stage as well as his hands and his feet.

Gradually his monologue acquired a definite personality. It had developed from a scattering of wisecracks to a philosophical point of view. He dispensed pills of bitter truth in the sugar-coating of his impertinent jests. “I once explained to my audience why I was able to tell the truth. It is because I never mixed up in politics.” The devious ways of politics had become the continual butt of his satire. “You know, the more you read about politics the more you have to admit that each party looks worse than the other.” There wasn’t an officeholder who was free from his lashing tongue. He played no favorites either in party or in personality. Democrat, Republican, Wilson, Harding, Hoover, Coolidge, Roosevelt—not one of them was free from his caustic observations. Yet not one of them harbored any grudge against him. He was so good-natured in his scorn. His criticism was not

## WILL ROGERS

the deadly poison of a foe, but the healing medicine of a friend.

And there was much that in his opinion needed healing in the political and social sickness of his day. Oppressive labor conditions. "Judge Gary reported for *one hour* in favor of a *twelve hour* day. Then he was so exhausted they had to carry him out." The diplomatic muddle with Mexico. "We chased Villa over the border for five miles, but run into a lot of government red tape and had to come back." Our too easy attitude toward the pan-handlers of Europe. "Our foreign dealings are an open book—generally a checkbook." Our amateurishness in our international relationships. "The United States never lost a war or won a conference." The Geneva Peace Convention. "The Convention is off to a flying start. There is nothing to prevent their succeeding but human nature." And our unpreparedness—this was in 1934—in the face of aggressive dictatorship. "Walked into a barber shop today . . . Heard the radio going and somebody raising Old Ned with somebody. I says, 'Who's that?' They says, 'Why, that's the President giving some folks fits for being against military preparedness.' I says, 'Amen.' Sic 'em, Franklin. Pour it on 'em. If they want to know what 'Not having a gun will do for you' they can point out China and India."

The saddest truths, observed G. K. Chesterton, are often spoken in jest.

## V

WILL ROGERS WAS one prophet who was not without honor in his country. Generous praise and lavish offers were heaped upon him from every side. One or two colleges even tried to give him an honorary degree. But he had too fine a sense of humor to accept this distinction. "Degrees have lost prestige enough as it is without handing 'em around to comedians, and it's this handing 'em out promiscuously that has helped to cheapen 'em. Let a guy get in there and battle four years if he wants one."

This was the quality that people loved best about Will Rogers

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—his freedom from all affectation. Whether on or off the stage, he was always informal. He was equally opposed to full-dress clothes and full-dress speech. He talked to his audiences as a man talks to a visiting friend. Again and again, after his intimate chat on the stage, he would sit down on the edge with his feet dangling over the orchestra pit. "Now, folks, please go home. I'm tired of messing with you."

He regarded himself as an ordinary fellow talking with his ordinary neighbors. He felt embarrassed when critics referred to him as a public figure, a statesman and a sage. "I am just an entertainer. All I do is to watch the Government and report the facts." He even refused to call himself a humorist. "The facts themselves are humorous enough."

He saw the ridiculous sadness of the human show. Yet he was modest enough to refrain from suggesting any improvements. Once, after a meeting with Bernard Shaw, he remarked, "We've got a great deal in common. Both of us know the world is wrong, but we don't know what's the matter with it."

His mind couldn't grasp the evils of the world, but his instincts rebelled against them. There was too much distrust between man and man. Too many contracts, too little faith. Will Rogers never signed a contract, and he never broke his word.

There was too much cruelty between man and man, and between man and beast. This instinct for cruelty was a trait that just never found its way into the character of Will Rogers. His sympathies always went out to his fellowmen. During the entire World War I he contributed, out of a salary none too large, a hundred dollars a week to the Red Cross. After the Nicaragua earthquake of 1931, he contributed \$5000 for the relief of the victims. These were but drops in the bucket of his lifelong generosity. "I've been lucky more than I deserve. I'd better pay up the score."

He paid up the score not only to his fellowmen, but to all living things. "You know, it's funny," he once said to Fred Stone, "but I guess I'm about the only cowboy who never owned a gun."



*George M. Cohan*



*Henry Ford*



## WILL ROGERS

When I was a kid I used to go jack-rabbit hunting with the boys, but they did all the shooting, I never killed anything in my life."

### VI

IN HIS PERSON and his talk Will Rogers remained casual, even careless, to the end. "Will had a rule," writes his wife. "He dressed only once a day." On one occasion he was invited to attend a dinner given in honor of the Mayor of Los Angeles. His wife laid out a clean shirt and a freshly pressed suit on his bed.

"What's wrong with *this* suit?" he protested when he arrived from his work at the studio. "And with this shirt? They're clean enough. I just put them on this morning." And he left for the dinner dressed in his old and comfortable clothes.

And, too, he always went to his performances dressed in his old and comfortable words. "I got me a dictionary one time," he said, "but it didn't last long . . . Here's one good thing about language, there is always a short word for it. 'Course the Greeks have a word for it, the dictionary has a word for it. I love words but I don't like strange ones. You don't understand them, and they don't understand you. Old words is like old friends—you know 'em the minute you see 'em."

The slovenly twist to the old tie, the ungrammatical turn of the old phrase, but the familiar lovable warmth underneath—this was the careless unconventional charm of Will Rogers at his best.

### VII

HE WAS restless as ever. Though he had built himself a substantial estate at Santa Monica, his spirit was always on the wing. "I like to go away just for the fun of coming back." Vaudeville and lecture tours, trips to collect funds for charity, and pleasure jaunts around the world. At times he was so far away from home that "it took me a month before I found out that Notre Dame had lost a game." But everywhere the same human folk with

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the same human needs and the same human tastes. "The countryside here," he wrote from Siberia, "resembles the countryside in Oklahoma. And the farmers," he added, "are just as bad off." From Harbin he wrote: "What do you think I found here? A war? A revolution? No! *Abie's Irish Rose!* Played by Russians and Chinese combined."

And always the blessedness of coming home—to his wife and four children, and the simple western food. "About all I do when I come back is just shake hands and eat . . . Beans, and what beans—kinder soupy navy beans cooked with plenty of real fat meat. And then the ham . . . Then the cream gravy . . . Ham gravy is just about the last word in gravys . . . Now then comes the corn bread. Not the corn bread like you mean. I mean corn pone, made with nothing but meal, and hot water and salt . . . Beans, cornbread, country ham, and gravy! Then for dessert? Don't have room for any dessert. Had any more room, would eat some more beans."

A brief rest, a satisfying bellyful of the home food and the home affection, and then off again on the wing.

1935. Will Rogers had worked and traveled strenuously for several years. He was tired. "Time to take a rest, Will," said his wife. But no. His friend, Wiley Post, was about to start on an air trip across Siberia to Moscow. Will Rogers decided to go along.

"The California night was cool," writes his wife. "Will and I were sitting in the grandstand at Gilmore Stadium, watching a rodeo . . . I watched him grin and wave to the contestants as they rode by on the tanbark . . . Will knew most of the boys in the show; and one by one, as the evening wore on, the old-timers came over to shake hands with him . . .

"That night in Los Angeles we drove from Gilmore Stadium to the airport. The waiting room was crowded and we slipped outside to talk until the plane was ready to go. Then we said good-by, and with his overcoat over his shoulder and a roll of midnight editions under his arm, Will stepped aboard. The plane taxied down the field, turned around and came back for the take-

## WILL ROGERS

off. As the ship nosed up I caught a fleeting glimpse through the window—he was smiling—and I stood looking up at the red and green lights of the plane until they disappeared in the darkness . . .”

Ten days later the news flashed around the world—“Will Rogers dead in an airplane crash on the tundras of Alaska.”

## VIII

“SHE HAD LIVED such a life,” wrote Will Rogers when one of his sisters had died, “that it was a privilege to pass away. Death didn’t scare her. It was only an episode in her life. If you live right, death is a joke to you, so far as fear is concerned.”

These words were prophetic of the manner in which he himself died. When they discovered his mangled body, there was a smile upon his lips.



**GEORGE M. COHAN**

*Important Dates in the Life of George M. Cohan*

- 1878—Born, Providence, R. I.      1920—Dissolved partnership  
1891—Sold his first song.                      with Sam Harris.  
1899—Married Ethel Levey.      1924—Wrote autobiography,  
1901—Produced his first full              Twenty Years on  
   length play, The Gov-              Broadway.  
   ernor's Son.      1928—Produced Elmer the  
1904—Formed partnership              Great.  
   with Sam H. Harris.      1934—Played in Eugene O'-  
1905—Scored success in Forty-              Neill's Ah, Wilderness.  
   five Minutes from      1937—Resumed partnership  
   Broadway.                      with Sam Harris.  
1910—Produced Get-Rich-      1938—Played part of President  
   Quick Wallingford.              F. D. Roosevelt in I'd  
1913—Produced Seven Keys              Rather Be Right.  
   to Baldpate.      1942—Died, New York.  
1917—Wrote war song, Over  
   There.

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# George Michael Cohan

1878-1942

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ONE NIGHT George M. Cohan was sitting at a table at Jim Churchill's, the rendezvous for theatrical celebrities. A down-and-out and consumptive ex-trouper, George Fuller Golden, walked over to the table.

"Anything I can do for you, George?"

"Yes, Mr. Cohan. I'm writing a book on vaudeville, and I'm selling advertising space in it."

"What's the cost?"

"Not much, Mr. Cohan. Twenty-five dollars a quarter page, fifty dollars a half page, a hundred dollars a full page."

"All right, George, put me down for half a page."

"Thanks, Mr. Cohan." Golden looked on, a trifle disappointed, as the Song-and-Dance-Man took out his check book. He had expected a full page ad from George M. Cohan.

"Here you are, kid, take care of yourself," said Cohan as he handed the check to Golden.

Golden looked at the check and fainted. It was made out for \$10,000.

George M. Cohan was so skillful in portraying other people's

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS AMERICANS

lives because he was so gentle in getting under other people's skins and into their hearts.

### II

AT THE HEIGHT of their successful partnership, Cohan and Harris were looked upon as "just a couple of lucky Jews." Cohan was often taken for a Jew because of his Semitic-seeming name. As a matter-of-fact, however, he was a full-blooded Irishman whose original family name was Keohane—pronounced Ca-han or Co-han.

His father, Jeremiah John Cohan, and his mother, Nellie Costigan Cohan, were among the "aristocrats" of the nineteenth century troupers. Fiddler and mimic and dancer and singer, Jerry Cohan organized his own troupes, wrote his own sketches, invented his own dances, and was generally regarded in the profession as a man with too big a heart and too empty a purse. In the spring of 1874, having no money and no plans, he decided to marry. "It's more fun to starve in company"—especially in the company of a young and pretty and vivacious Irish colleen. From now on, it was the team of "Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Cohan" in their favorite melodrama, *The Owls of New York*.

A merry, tumultuous, knockabout life between the footlights and the boarding houses. No time for rest—not even when their three children, Maude, Josephine and George Michael, were born. Maude died at nine months, and Josephine was two years old when George Michael uttered his first little song-cry to an unheeding world.

Scene, the home of a cousin of the Cohans in Providence, Rhode Island. Time, July 3, 1878—a date which the dramatic-minded Jerry changed, for the official record, to July 4. "The birthday of American independence, the birthday of a great American actor."

But to the people of Providence the date or even the event of George's birth made little difference. "A good but shiftless fam-



## GEORGE M. COHAN

ily. Can't afford too many children. Got to be on the go all the time."

And on the go they were, only a few weeks after George's arrival. The Four Cohans—father and mother dancing on the stage, the babies sleeping in a hotel. One evening in Albany, the hotel room in which the two babies were asleep—one in a crib and the other on a trunk—caught fire. Fortunately, the fire was put out and Josie and Georgie were carried to safety. When the parents returned from their performance, they found the babies still asleep.

As Georgie grew older, his parents tried to introduce him to a little "schooling and fiddling." Georgie developed an equal aversion both to his music and his books. Many years later, when George and Jerry were dining at an expensive hotel in Cincinnati, they listened entranced to an expertly rendered violin solo. "Say, dad," exclaimed George when the solo was over, "if I had paid more attention to my violin lessons, I might now be playing here."

"Yes, son," replied Jerry, "but you wouldn't be eating here."

It was in his eighth year that Georgie gave up his school books and his violin to take his place as a professional actor upon the stage. The part in which he made his first hit was that of Henry Peck in "Peck's Bad Boy." He played this character—"the incorrigible lad with a heart of gold"—to the hilt because it was himself that he portrayed. "Never was so mischievous a leprechaun let loose upon an unsuspecting world." Always playing pranks upon prompters, managers, musicians, actors, property men, mechanics—every molested member of the cast and the backstage crew. And always warding off a blow with his warm and disarming smile. A laughter-loving and popular gang, the Four Cohans—Josie, too, "America's Youngest and Most Graceful Skirt Dancer," had joined them on the stage. Talented parents, precocious kids. At eleven, Georgie was already writing his own sketches and songs. He knew very little about grammar and even less about music, but he had an inborn genius for the universal

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS AMERICANS

language that reaches from heart to heart. "I never had time to learn how to write, I was always so busy writing."

Writing, and living, and restlessly roaming from town to town. The tide of adventure was in his blood. At fifteen he tried to elope with a female baritone. A detective hired by his father brought him home—the family was staying at a Rhode Island summer resort at the time. As Georgie and his would-be bride got off the train, they were greeted by the local band. The bandmaster, a friend of the Cohans, winked at the musicians. "Go to it, boys!" And the disappointed lover was compelled, to his chagrin, to walk past the bandstand to the tune of *The Cat Came Back*. "It's all right, boys," he waved sheepishly to the players. "When I run away with my next girl, you'll have to play *The Cat Got Lost*."

Always getting into scrapes, he yet managed to guide the Four Cohans into bigger and bigger time until finally they reached New York. George was now the acknowledged business manager of the team.

And at twenty-one he brought a new member to the team. It was in the summer of 1899 that he married Ethel Levey, an Irish actress who had assumed the name of her Jewish stepfather for her stage career. George wrote her a song—*I Guess I'll Have to Telegraph My Baby*—which became one of the high spots of the show. The Cohans had reached top billing and top money. Their act was now good for \$1000 a week.

And so they sang and danced their way into the twentieth century—the staid Jerry, the gentle Nellie, Josie of the "light fantastic toe," Ethel of the hearty, husky voice, and George, with straw hat and bamboo cane, jerky gait and bobbing head and corner of the mouth uplifted in a perpetual grin, a Pied Piper leading his audiences of grown-up children out of the workaday world into the fairyland of whimsy and wisecracks and dreams. "The squarest little shooter and the smartest little guy of them all."

III

THE MARRIED LIFE of George and Ethel staggered along the rocky road to the divorce courts. Two fiery temperaments, they generated between them the sparks of many a flareup and misunderstanding. On one of the train jumps during their vaudeville circuit, there was an unusually heated discussion in which the entire family took sides. Unable to stifle his mounting anger, George finally stormed out of the car and went off to sulk in the smoker.

A few minutes later the conductor came along. "Ticket, please."

"Out there with the company," barked George.

"What company?"

"The damndest company you ever saw!"

But for the present he stuck to the company, and to Ethel Levey. The birth of a girl—they named her Georgette—and for a while there was peace in the family. But then the fire of their conflicting temperaments flared up anew. The end of their marriage, if not yet in sight, was nevertheless a foregone conclusion. "They'll never stick it out. Oil and fire burn fine, but they burn down too soon."

For the present, however, his domestic excitement spurred him along to artistic success. Songs, vaudeville sketches, full length plays—*I Love Everyone in the Wide Wide World*, *The Story of the Wedding March*, *The Governor's Son*, *Running for Office*, *Shades of Night*, *I Long to See the Sunrise in the East*—came tumbling like a cataract from the magic of his pen. Again and again he would sell a play before he had written a line, before even he had definitely worked out the plot. But once the sale was made, he would sit at his desk twelve, sixteen, twenty hours a day, spinning out the story with indefatigable invention and incredible speed. "There are half a dozen geniuses in that compact little body of his." He wrote his plays, he produced them,

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS AMERICANS

he staged them, and he played the leading part in them. In one of his plays he brought the house down singing *If I Were Only Mr. Morgan*. Referring to this occasion, the *New York World* wrote: "Master Cohan is a fair sized trust in himself. Why he should wish he were Mr. Morgan is . . . difficult to understand."

Twenty-five now, and already one of the most familiar figures in New York, gaining friends wherever he went—and enemies, sometimes through other people's envy, sometimes through his own generosity. "I once made Filson a present of a sketch of mine—and now he is one of the stanchest enemies I have." If you want people to avoid you, said an Eastern sage, put them in debt to your kindness. What people hate most is to pay a debt.

A cynical and a sensible little guy, this kid who had danced his way into the affections of New York. A fellow who loved to put his foot on the brass rail and to buy drinks for everybody in the house—actors, writers, singers, agents, publishers, prize fighters, baseball players, anybody who happened to be in the mood for a spicy snip or a cheering word.

And yet he was not satisfied. "I've been in this stage business since I was a kid. I've written all sorts of trash—but nothing ever that was good, real!" And now he had something good in his mind—at least, the title for it. *Little Johnny Jones*. He spoke about it to Abe Erlanger, the "Czar" of the show business. "Kid, I've got a play for you that'll bowl 'em over."

"Fine!" said Erlanger. "Tell me the story."

"It's about a jockey, little Johnny Jones. You'll like it, kid!"

"But what's the story?"

"It gives me a real part. Scenery, songs, dances, dialogue—best thing I've ever done, no fooling."

"But the story?"

"It's a knockout, kid! Come on, let's start rehearsals."

Erlanger, however, was in no mood to start rehearsals on a story he knew nothing about. Later that day, conversing with a number of his pals at the Metropole, Cohan chuckled: "How

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the hell was I going to tell the story to Erlanger when I didn't know it myself?"

Shortly after his interview with Erlanger, Cohan formed a much more important partnership for the production of his play—and of many other plays. He was sitting at his desk in the offices of the Miner Lithograph Company, a general meeting place for theatrical folk. Walter J. Moore, the New York manager of the company, walked over and sat down beside him. "How's that new play of yours coming along, Georgie?"

"Just fine, kid."

"Got Abe Erlanger interested?"

"I guess so," was the non-committal answer.

Moore pulled his chair up closer. "Listen, Georgie. You've got a full-sized job on your hands. Too big for any one man. Even for the great little Cohan."

"Then what do you expect me to do?"

"Get yourself a partner, Georgie. Somebody to take the business worries off your hands."

"Have anybody in mind?"

"Yes, Georgie. That fellow over there talking to Al Woods. His name's Harris, Sam Harris. A guy with imagination, a good business head, and a square shooter."

"Sounds all right. Bring him over."

Moore raised his voice. "Hey, Sam! Come here and meet a friend of mine . . . Sam, this is Georgie Cohan . . . George, meet Sam Harris."

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Cohan."

"How're you, kid."

And thus began one of the most famous partnerships in the American theater.

## IV

SAM HARRIS, a product of New York's East Side, was small, wiry, astute, honest to a fault, and a wizard in diagnosing and correct-

ing the weak parts in a play. He had something of the Midas touch in his managerial makeup. Whatever play he touched was likely to turn into gold.

His first venture under the partnership of Cohan and Harris—no contracts were ever signed between them—was *Little Johnny Jones*. The play opened at Hartford on October 8, 1904. On the opening night Cohan and Harris counted their available funds. They had less than \$50 between them. And their pockets were full of unpaid bills—for costumes, properties, scenery, salaries and what not. They entered the theater with a sinking heart. Three hours later they emerged triumphant. They had an unmis-takable hit on their hands—a play with a lively plot, sparkling dialogue, three superb songs (*Yankee Doodle Boy*, *Give My Regards to Broadway*, and *Goodbye, Flo*), and an inimitable monologue (*Life's a Funny Proposition After All*) recited by George M. Cohan himself.

The success of this play convinced Erlanger that George M. Cohan was a good man to have around. He sent for him and asked him to write a musical play for Fay Templeton—a small-town girl who had made good on Broadway. "Have you any idea on the subject?"

"Sure," said Cohan, whose "idea on the subject" had popped into his head the moment he heard the name of Fay Templeton. "It's to be a small-town play—a 'Rube' show somewhere around New York." His brain and his tongue worked simultaneously. "How about a place like New Rochelle? . . . Great idea, don't you think? I'll get to work right away. Tomorrow you'll have the plot and the song titles and the whole outline ready. And we'll have Victor Moore for the male part. And what do you say to Cleveland or Cincinnati or Columbus for the opening?"

In reply to the tornado, Abe Erlanger could only gasp. "Yes," he managed to blurt out, "Columbus *might* be a good place for the opening . . ."

A whirlwind period of production, a whirlwind success, and a sad aftermath. George M. Cohan and Ethel Levey had decided

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to go their separate ways. They were divorced in the winter of 1907.

### V

AND NOW came one of the most tumultuous years of his life. Divorce, courtship, marriage—to Agnes Nolan of Boston, whose fireman father didn't consider an actor good enough for his daughter—a quarrel with his parents, a reconciliation, with George crying like a child in his mother's lap, three successful plays on Broadway, a *bon voyage* party in the grand ballroom of the Hotel Knickerbocker, and a trip to Europe with his winsome young bride, whose father had at last been convinced that even a New York actorman can make a desirable son-in-law for a Boston fireman.

Return from Europe, reunion with his family, new successes for the Four Cohans—"my mother thanks you, my father thanks you, my sister thanks you, and I thank you"—a new relationship established through the marriage of Sam Harris to Agnes Nolan's sister, Alice, and five productions within a single year under the management of Cohan and Harris. Yet George was still unhappy. Though popular with the "gallery," he had failed to win the approval of the critics. "A smart little guy, but no real substance to him—too versatile to be deep." So that's what they thought of him! Well, he would show them they were wrong. Some day he would retire from his acting and devote himself entirely to his writing. And then he would give the world something *real*—"a regular play, a sane play, about things I know and people I know."

In 1909 he actually tried "retiring" for several months. He sat at his desk and wrote and wrote and wrote—and produced nothing. That is, nothing complete. But the time was not wasted. For in that period he laid the groundwork for some of his later works—*Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford*, *Seven Keys to Baldpate*, *Broadway Jones*—plays that were to come pretty close to being real.

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS AMERICANS

The actual writing of these plays, however, was but an item in a crowded routine. George M. Cohan worked best under pressure. By training and by instinct he was a "variety" man. He found his ideal workshop in a hotel room, and his favorite retreat for meditation in the hubbub of a rehearsal. It was under such conditions that he dramatized George Randolph Chester's short stories about J. Rufus Wallingford—a "straight" comedy without songs or dances.

It was his first artistic success. "I take my hat off to George M. Cohan," wrote Channing Pollock in the *Green Book*. Here, agreed the critics with hardly a dissenting voice, was a "new Cohan"—a man who surpassed all the contemporary American playwrights in the hilarity of his satire and the brilliance of his lines.

*Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford* was not only his first artistic success, but one of his greatest *financial* triumphs. After the play had run 424 times in New York, Cohan one evening walked into the Metropole and spoke to one of his cronies, Edmund Plohn: "Kid, take a good look at me. You're looking at a millionaire."

At this stage, George M. Cohan owned not only a million, but "all Broadway." A new theater bearing his name had been opened in Times Square; the Friars Club and the Society of American Dramatists and Composers gave dinners in his honor; the leading American newspapers, including even the sedate *Boston Transcript*, regarded him as little less than a god. The key to the city, to every footlight-loving city in the country, was his for the asking.

A man with a ready plot, a ready purse, and a ready wit. One evening he attended the premiere of Paul Armstrong's fascinating melodrama, *The Deep Purple*. After the first act, he sought out the author. "Great stuff, kid. You ought to thank George Tyler for the cast."

"I'm not speaking to Tyler," said Armstrong.

After the second act, Cohan said to Armstrong, "It's a sure hit, Paul. You ought to thank Hugh Ford for the direction."



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"I'm not speaking to Ford," said Armstrong.

After the play, Cohan met his press agent, Edwin Dunn, in the lobby of the theater. "I wonder," said Dunn, "why Paul Armstrong didn't make a curtain speech."

"I know why," flashed Cohan with a grin. "He's not speaking to the audience."

## VI

SUNLIGHT, and storm cloud, and sunlight again. George M. Cohan had reached the meridian of his career. Wealth, popularity, genius, friendship, love—all these he had in overflowing measure. He was head now of one of the great families of America—they still lived and traveled and, whenever possible, played together. "There's a great and tender understanding in that Cohan family." Once when they were on tour with a company of sixty, George and his father occupied different sleepers. Every morning George made his way through the train until he came to his father's berth and greeted him with a "Hello, dad" and a kiss. "Never in the annals of mankind," observes Cohan's biographer, Ward Morehouse, "has there been a son more devoted to his parents." And, he might have added, a brother more devoted to his sister. When his sister and his father died, within a few months of each other, Cohan felt for a time completely lost. "It was then," he confided later to a friend, "that I went on the only period of hard and sustained drinking in all my life."

Death, desolation, war. April 6, 1917. The Germans had torpedoed an American ship. Congress had declared that a state of hostility existed between the United States and Germany. Life, Cohan realized, had its brutal as well as its tender face. He was sitting at his desk trying to work at one of his plays. But the characters refused to come to life. No time now for comedy. The world was attuned to a more serious note. He took up a piece of paper and began to scribble aimlessly. Soon the thoughts and the

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words and the music began to take shape, and within a few minutes they came to life in a marching song for ten million men:

*Over there, over there,  
Send the word, send the word over there,  
That the Yanks are coming, the Yanks are coming,  
The drums rum-tumming everywhere.  
So prepare, say a prayer,  
Send the word, send the word to beware,  
We'll be over, we're coming over,  
And we won't come back till  
It's over over there.*

A sadder and wiser Cohan now. A man not only of impetuous activity, but of serious thought. Yet masterful and independent as ever. Having quarreled with Sam Harris, he dissolved the partnership and went on producing alone. And having been defied by the officers of the Actors' Equity Association, he fought them throughout the actors' strike of 1919 and refused to make peace with the Equity even after he had lost the fight. A strange role for a man who had always been on the side of the underdog. But Cohan was a strange man—a sort of benevolent despot, a man with a great heart but with an equally great pride. When the strike was over, he declared, "I don't think I'll produce any more; I don't think I'll act any more; I'll go to Great Neck and hide . . . And that's the kind of a little guy I am."

But that was not "the kind of a little guy" he was. He could no more separate himself from the theater than he could separate himself from the breath of his life. Before long he was at work on another play, *The Tavern*—a script which was submitted to him as a melodrama and which he rewrote into a farce. As usual, he engaged the actors and went into rehearsal before the play was finished. "The last act," relates the co-producer of the play, Brock Pemberton, "was fed to the director and cast in short takes and the suspense was terrific." The leading character in the play, a vagabond, appeared to the very last scene as a romantic hero. The man who played this part was Arnold Daly. On the day

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before the opening, when the final scene came galloping in fresh from Cohan's desk, Arnold Daly almost had a fit. His romantic hero turned out to be an escaped lunatic.

The surprise was as great to the public as it was to Arnold Daly. *The Tavern* was a huge success.

## VII

SUNSET, and evening star, and after that the dark. Cohan was now regarded not only as an outstanding playwright, but as a first-rate actor. "It is an annual surprise," wrote Alexander Woolcott, "to find how deft, how artful, how quiet, how winning and how gently pathetic a comedian is George M. Cohan." An older generation of critics had condemned him as "a symbol of brash violence—a disciple of perpetual motion." The newer generation had seen him grow into "the softest spoken and the most subtle of our male comedians." Somebody, observed Heywood Broun, should create a foundation which would endow all stage aspirants with tickets to see Cohan act. With a single low inflection of the voice, he could transform a lifeless sequence into a living scene. When he appeared in *Ah, Wilderness*, one of Eugene O'Neill's lesser plays, his acting hypnotized the audience into hailing it as a masterpiece. But the mastery, as Gilbert Gabriel observed in the New York *American*, "remains that of Mr. Cohan."

And it was the mastery of Mr. Cohan's acting—he played the part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt—that turned *I'd Rather Be Right*, a musical comedy by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart, into "the most important and talked-about enterprise in the theater of its time."

This play, too, was a landmark in another respect. It marked the resumption of the partnership of Cohan and Harris. The reconciliation of the two "friendly enemies" had come about in a simple manner. One evening they met at the Plaza. "George," said Harris, "why did we ever split?"

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"Dunno, kid," replied Cohan. "Couple of damn fools, I guess."

It was Tennyson, we believe, who wrote, "Blessings on the falling out that all the more endears." Cohan and Harris had now become greater friends than ever. Each tried to outdo the other in generosity. One day they sat at Dinty Moore's, buying drinks for all their cronies who happened to drop in. Finally the waiter was ready with their check. It was for about \$70. Both of them made a grab for it. Cohan got it.

"If you let Mr. Cohan pay the check," cried Harris, "you'll never see me here again!"

"If you take the money from Mr. Harris," growled Cohan, "I'll never again step into this place, so help me!"

They continued this altercation, to the embarrassment of the waiter, until Billy Moore, son of the proprietor, came along. The waiter explained the trouble.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," said Moore, who reached for the check and tore it into bits.

Whereupon Cohan leaped forward, held out his hand to Harris, and grinned: "Shake, kid. The old gag works every time."

Cohan was sixty now. Three-score years, three-score plays, and hundreds of songs. Yet he was still dissatisfied. "I should have done more, much more." He felt ill at ease among the so-called highbrows. "I'm nothing but an ignorant little guy." Once, when Irving Berlin proclaimed him as "the greatest natural song writer America has ever produced," he grinned sheepishly at Berlin and said, "*There*, kid, is a guy who can *really* write a song."

A gray-headed, sulky, quarrelsome, blustering, temperamental, big-hearted little trouper—an Irishman of many moods and infinite charm. Always he had a circle of friends around him, and always he paid their bills. And the tips he gave to waiters and to other servants were, as a friend expressed it, "out of this world."

Still exuberant as ever; but his exuberance was now of the spirit rather than of the flesh. The flame of his life was flickering low. Too uninterruptedly energetic, too early exhausted. He

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smiled sadly when on his final tour he heard a Pittsburgh girl remark: "So this is the great Cohan who wrote all those corny old tunes. Looks on his last legs, poor guy!"

His last legs—too tired for dancing now, but still sturdy enough to take him occasionally around the reservoir in Central Park. "Look at that Fifth Avenue skyline. When I first started going around this lake—it was twenty-five years ago—those high buildings weren't there . . . Funny thing, life—buildings go up, men go down."

Men were going down too rapidly around him—relatives, acquaintances, friends. Most of all he missed his "more than partner, my very brother," Sam Harris. His footsteps dragged as he followed Harris to his last resting place in the midsummer of 1941.

And now, no more walks around the lake. A bedridden invalid, who saw in a projection room an advance showing of a picture based on his life. "Great stuff," he said. "That's the kind of a little guy I would have liked to have been."

When he died (November 4, 1942), a whole nation mourned. That's the kind of a little guy he was.



**HENRY FORD**

*Important Dates in the Life of Henry Ford*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1863—Born, Wayne County, Michigan.           | 1903—Formed the Ford Motor Company.                     |
| 1876—Became interested in repairing watches. | 1909—Began to specialize in Model T car.                |
| Became mechanic in Detroit.                  | 1915—Chartered Peace Ship in effort to end World War I. |
| 1888—Married Clara Bryant.                   | 1918—Ran unsuccessfully for U. S. Senate.               |
| Employed by Detroit Edison Company.          | 1927—Completed car number 15,000,000.                   |
| 1892—Completed his first gasoline motor car. | 1939-45—Devoted self to government war work.            |
| 1899—Organized Detroit Automobile Company.   |   |
| 1902—Went into business for himself.         |   |



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# Henry Ford

1863—

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A NEW MONSTER had appeared on Main Street. A horseless carriage. "It shoots as it travels!" exclaimed the people as they heard it backfire. In Galveston, Texas, a prominent citizen was so terrified by the backfire that he drew a gun. "If that happens again," he yelled to the driver, "I'll kill you!"

In another state, the new monster passed by a farmer and his wife in a wagon. The horses reared in alarm, and the woman leaped from the wagon and took to the woods. The driver stopped the car, walked over to the farmer and asked whether he could help him tame the horses. "Hell, no," said the farmer. "But you can help me tame my wife!"

## II

THE CREATOR of one of the world's most amazing miracles began life simply enough. His father was a Michigan farmer of intermingled Scotch, English and Irish blood. A good basis for sobriety, imagination and grit. "The young fellow," said his neighbors of William Ford, "has a clever hand and a kind heart." Always ready to help a fellow with the repairing of his tools and

the plowing of his fields. A year after his marriage to Mary Litigot, when the papers were filled with the news of the Battle of Gettysburg, his first child Henry was born. "I want to see my son dedicated to the work of peace."

It was a peaceful home in which Henry grew up. One of the earliest incidents he could remember was watching his father at work in the fields. Long, straight furrows, so pretty to the sight. But here was a furrow that was not so straight. The plow had been turned aside at one point. "Why did you do it, dad?" For answer, his father took his hand and led him to the spot. There, on the ground, was a song-sparrow's nest. "I didn't want to disturb it, son."

A peaceful home, and a busy one. Plenty of chores to do in the fields, in the barn, in the house. And, for a family living so far away from the supply stores, all sorts of gadgets to invent. Screw drivers out of shingle nails. Gimlets out of knitting needles. Tweezers out of corset stays. And, always, their own and their neighbors' watches and clocks to repair. "Has your timepiece stopped going? Leave it to Henry. *He'll* fix it!"

As often as not, Henry would take a clock apart even when it needed no fixing. He wanted to see how well he could put it together again. "Every clock in the Ford home," remarked a friend jokingly, "shudders when it sees Henry coming."

In school, Henry paid more attention to his gadgets than his books. Indeed, his books served merely as a screen behind which he kept tinkering with his watches. The bigger the book, the better the shield between Henry's fingers and the teacher's eye. "Henry," said the teacher one day, "you seem to be more interested in your geography than in any other book."

But sometimes his teacher caught him at his "idle play." And then Henry had to sit in the corner with a girl—the regular punishment for misbehavior in school.

He found the punishment almost as pleasant as the crime.

But the pleasures of his childhood were arrested by an abrupt shock. He was only twelve when his mother died. "From that day on, the house was like a watch without a mainspring."

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Four more years of schooling and tinkering around with all sorts of machinery, and then he left home for a job in Detroit. Or, rather, two jobs. In the daytime, he was an apprenticed mechanic; at night, a cleaner of clocks. His total pay for the two jobs was \$3.00 a week.

But he was ambitious. He wanted to become a mass producer of watches. Two thousand a day at a manufacturing cost of thirty cents and at a selling price of one dollar. A great boon to humanity, and a tidy profit for himself.

He went ahead with the idea, designed the machinery, cut the dies, and secured a partner. And then he had to give up the idea. "I could easily make two thousand watches a day. But how in the world could I sell them?"

A disappointed dream. But disappointments are only the seeds of future dreams. The idea of mass production had taken root in his mind. "Patience. It will come to flower in due time."

For the present, Henry Ford yielded to his father's call for help on the farm. Nineteen years old. The golden age of courtship. It was on New Year's Eve that he met Clara Bryant, a dark-haired girl with a sunbright smile. "Such a lovely young lady." "Such a sensible young man."

Apprenticeship for marriage. Six years of working and saving and planning; and then, on Clara's birthday (April 11) in 1888, she became his bride.

A new home, a new piano, and the reawakening of an old dream. Something to be produced on a large scale. An inexpensive, serviceable, pleasure-giving gadget for his fellowmen.

But what? Ah, he had it! A new kind of carriage. A sort of privately-owned railway coach. Self-propelled, like a steam engine. He began to tinker with the idea on his farm. He took the cast-iron wheels of an old mowing machine, attached them to a crude locomotive with home-made cylinders, built a fire in the boiler, and tried it out. A spasmodic start, a splutter of steam, and the carriage came to a stop.

Another attempt, another, and still another—water tubes, fire

tubes, flash designs. Same results. The thing wouldn't go. "The steam engine will never do for a common-road passenger car."

And then, an inspiration. One day in Detroit he saw a new kind of engine. It was operated by gasoline. That evening he explained the idea to his wife. He had read about it in the *World of Science*. "I've been on the wrong track, Clara. What I'd like to do is make an engine that'd sort of pump pop into pop bottles. A gasoline engine that'd take the place of a horse."

He drew a diagram on the back of a music sheet. "You see, if I could harness such an engine to four wheels——"

"Yes, Henry."

"But to do that, we'd have to give up the farm and move to Detroit. I'd need tools, and money, and all that sort of thing."

"I understand, Henry. I'll be ready when you say the word."

And so, on a late September day in 1891, they spread out the racks of their hay wagon, heaped all their belongings upon it, and started off in the direction of their dream.

### III

DATE, August 12, 1896. Scene, the banquet room of the Oriental Hotel, Manhattan Beach, Long Island. Occasion, the convention of the officers of the Edison Electric Company. At the head sat Thomas Alva Edison himself.

Conversation about the Presidential race between Bryan and McKinley, the plight of Cuba under the oppression of Spain, the expansion of American industry both at home and abroad. And then the talk drifted on to some of the latest industrial developments in the United States. One of the dinner guests touched Edison on the arm. "Do you see that young fellow across the table?"

"Yes. What about him?"

"Well, he's invented a gasoline car."

"Really? Sounds very interesting." And turning to Henry Ford,

he said, "Young man, do you mind telling me about that new car of yours?"

The man who sat next to Edison vacated his chair and invited Ford to take his place. The young inventor began to explain his idea to the old inventor. Edison nodded approval. "Looks as if you've really got something." And then, "Tell me how you explode the gasoline in the cylinder."

"By electricity, sir." And taking a menu card from the table, Ford roughly sketched the principle of his make-and-break mechanism.

Edison's fist came down upon the table with a bang. "That's the thing, young man! Your car carries its own power plant—it's self-contained—no fire, no boiler. You've got it. Keep it up!"

Henry Ford kept it up. He was now the chief engineer at the Edison plant in Michigan. A very efficient young fellow, said the neighbors, but a little queer in the head. Spent all his evenings in a little alley shop behind the house, hammering away at some crazy contraption while everybody else was having a good time.

Wasting his time, and wasting his money. Didn't save up for a rainy day. Spent it all on useless tools. "Wonder what his wife must think? Doesn't she want to buy a new dress once in a while?"

But Clara Ford had the utmost faith in her husband. "Don't worry about me, Henry. My new dress can wait. Go right ahead."

At last his car was ready. "Like a strange, living creature from another world. You get into the seat, move a handle, and off it goes!"

Yet people were skeptical. A pretty enough toy, to be sure, but it would never do for practical purposes. Henry Ford, they said, was on the wrong track. Nobody but a fool would piddle around with a gasoline engine when everybody knew that the coming motive power was electricity.

And, nobody but a fool—or a genius—would give up the security of an engineer's job for the insecurity of an inventor's dream.

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A "crank" with no future, a wife and a child to support, and a sputtering motor as the only collateral against want. Yet he managed to get the coöperation of a few other "cranks" like himself. They formed a little company with a capital of \$10,000. The formation of this company was announced (August 19, 1899) in the *Detroit Free Press*. The item was sandwiched in between two advertisements—cucumbers at four cents a dozen, and cabbages at two cents a head.

The life of the company was short. One by one, Ford's backers lost heart and backed out.

But not Henry Ford. Slowly, patiently, fanatically, he went on with his dream. Another group of backers, another company dissolved. Two failures within three years. "Why don't you give up this crazy idea and go back to your job?" But Henry Ford "dug in with his toenails" and hung on. He built a racing car to enter in a meet against five other cars. A bicycle rider by the name of Barney Oldfield became interested in the car. "How do you run it?"

"Step in and find out."

Barney Oldfield stepped in. It took him but a few minutes to get the hang of the thing. "Let me race this car for you, Mr. Ford."

Henry Ford shook his head. "You've never driven a car before. It would be risking your life, you know."

Barney Oldfield insisted. "I might as well be dead as dead broke," he laughed.

Reluctantly Ford consented. Barney Oldfield drove the car and won the race.

From that day on, financial backing was no longer a problem to Henry Ford.

## IV

A NEW Ford company was organized with a cash investment of \$28,000. The investors hoped for some profit, but had no idea to

what a fantastic degree their hopes would be realized. One of them, the sister of James C. Couzens, put \$100 into the company. In due time her \$100 investment was worth \$355,000.

These fabulous profits were due not only to the inventive skill but to the business genius of Henry Ford. His aim was, mass production to reduce the cost of every car; his motto, a better product at a lower price. With this objective in mind, he kept on increasing his capacity and improving his cars—Model A, Model B, Model C, and so on until he got just what he and the public wanted—Model T. The famous “Tin Lizzie”—the toast and the jest of America. “No show,” wrote Roger Burlingame in *Engines of Democracy*, “was a complete success without a Ford joke. For six years, this is said to have taken the place of all paid advertising.” The publishers issued anthologies of “uncanny stories about a canny car.” The Ford cars were said to have overrun not only the entire world but the underworld. A magazine writer quoted His Satanic Majesty as saying to a visiting motorist, “Help yourself to one of these cars and take a spin around Hades.”

“But, Your Majesty,” replied the motorist, “these are all Fords.”

“Sure,” said the Devil. “That’s the Hell of it.”

The more they joked about the Ford, the more popular it became. “Two flies,” wrote Luke McLuke in his *Phord Philosophy*, can manufacture 48,876,552,154 new flies in six months, but they haven’t anything on two Ford factories.” In this joke, with all its exaggeration, there was almost more truth than travesty. In the summer of 1927, the output of the Ford Model T had reached the almost astronomical figure of fifteen million cars.

## V

HENRY FORD was now the butt of every humorist in the country. Every paper must have its quota of witticisms about the Ford “flivver.” Some of these witticisms were rather derogatory in tone. They got on the nerves of Ford’s associate, James C.

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Couzens. One day he sent the following letter to the editor of the *Detroit News*:

"SIR—I hereby forbid you ever again to mention the name of the Ford Motor Company in your publication.

James Couzens, General Manager."

At the same time, he cancelled all the Ford advertisements in that paper.

The editor sent out a representative to see Ford. "Jim has no sense of humor," laughed Ford. "I'll cancel his cancellation, and you can go right ahead with your jokes. I think they're funny. All good publicity."

Henry Ford had a strong sense of humor, and a heart full of compassion. When the first World War broke out, he was horrified at the spectacle of man's inhumanity to man. At the suggestion of a number of idealists, he fitted out a ship to carry to Europe a delegation that might arrange for an armistice between the belligerent countries. "If I can be of any service whatever in helping end this war, I shall do it if it costs me every dollar and every friend I have."

The idea of the Peace Ship became a standing joke among the newspapers. "This Vessel of Mercy," wrote Walter Millis, "was launched; to the undying shame of American journalism, upon one vast sea of ridicule."

The mission was from the first doomed to failure. But Ford gave to it all his strength and energy and faith—"one of the few really rational and generous impulses of those insane years"—until February, 1917, when the aggressiveness of the Prussians compelled the United States to sever diplomatic relations with Germany.

And then Ford threw himself heart and soul into the task of helping America prepare for the war. He converted his automobile plants into factories for the building of sea, air and land weapons—Liberty Motors, anti-submarine Eagles, caissons, helmets, ambulances, gas masks, battle-tanks and trucks. "I am a



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pacifist," he declared. "But if we can't have peace without fighting for it, by all means let us fight . . . And let us fight . . . with all our hearts and souls, until the end."

### VI

HENRY FORD was a man with his head in the clouds, but with his feet planted firmly upon the ground. Little by little he bought out his associates, until finally he alone controlled the Ford Motor Company. His organization had become an empire within a republic. It was a benevolent empire, to be sure. Like the more charitable of the Russian czars, he regarded himself as the Little Father of the men and the women who worked under his protection. He gave them good wages—too good, in fact, complained some of the professional economists. "Henry Ford," declared the *Wall Street Journal*, "has (in the establishing of a minimum wage) committed economic blunders if not crimes." He opened commissary stores where his workmen got the necessities of life at prices substantially lower than those prevailing in the rest of the country. He kept his workers employed even during the depression when such employment meant a considerable financial loss to himself. His friends predicted his early bankruptcy. But Ford only smiled.

For he was a perfect mechanic. He knew that a machine is at its best when it is well oiled. His workers were human machines. Keep them in trim, and the wheels will turn around without any friction or delay.

The workers, therefore, must accept Mr. Ford's kindness and Mr. Ford's commands. They must have no minds, no desires, no complaints. It was for him, and not for them, to decide whether their work was too hard or too speedy or too long. When his workers tried to organize themselves into a union and to join the CIO, he dismissed the eight "ringleaders." And when the workers, in retaliation, went on strike, he did everything within his power to put down the strike. He resented the interference of the

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workers, of the courts, even of the government, with his own "benevolent" way of doing things. Yet when the CIO was granted the legal right to organize his men, Henry Ford was big enough in spite of his resentment to accept the inevitable. "It's the law, and we're living up to it. If it's wrong, we'll find out. If it's right, we haven't anything to lose."

Henry Ford had his errors of judgment. Some of these errors resulted in inconvenience, and at times even in injustice, to others. But in every case, when convinced of his error, he made the necessary amends. In 1927, for example, a paper which he had founded—the *Dearborn Independent*—published a series of articles prejudicial to the Jews. These articles resulted in a libel suit against him. Believing in the accuracy of the statements as published in the articles, he spent more than a million dollars in preparation for his defense. In the course of the trial, however, he became convinced that the articles in question were unfair. Whereupon he made a public apology for the malignment of the Jewish race. "It has since been found," wrote the editor of the *Independent*, "that inaccuracies were present in the articles . . . Such statements . . . are withdrawn." In addition to this general retraction, Henry Ford issued a personal apology. "I deem it to be my duty as an honorable man to make amends for the wrong done to the Jews as fellow men and brothers, by asking their forgiveness for the harm I have unintentionally committed, by retracting so far as lies within my power the offensive charges laid at their door, and by giving them the unqualified assurance that henceforth they may look to me for friendship and good will."

The pettiness of error, the bigness of retraction, and the leavening grace of good will—these are among the fundamentals in the character of Henry Ford. In spite of his faults, he is intrinsically just and gentle and good. His goodness extends not only to his workers—among them there are 50 deaf mutes, 200 with crippled arms, and 1200 with only one eye—but to all helpless living things. Once, while he was having a new house built, he moved

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with his family into an old cottage. The cottage had been vacant for some time, and a couple of birds had made their nests just above the front door. When Ford noticed this, he put up the following sign on the front porch:

"Please use the back door. There is a nest of young phoebes in one corner of the porch, and a robin's nest in the other corner. Mr. Ford does not want anyone to use the front door until the little birds have left their nests."

He built hospitals, established schools, and rehabilitated worn-out acreage for farming. "It is my aim to develop young men and to restore old men." One day he visited the distinguished Negro scientist, Doctor George Washington Carver. He found him in poor health. "Pretty hard job to climb the stairs to your bedroom, isn't it, Doctor?"

"Oh, I manage it somehow," replied the old man.

Henry Ford turned the conversation to other matters. The next day, however, a number of workmen arrived at the home of Doctor Carver.

"What's the meaning of this?"

"We're going to install an automatic elevator, sir. Mr. Ford ordered it for you."

## VII

HENRY FORD wanted to see a country happy at work, happy at play. As for himself, he enjoyed his play as much as his work. He loved to go off "gipsying" into the forest with his three cronies—Harvey Firestone, John Burroughs and Thomas Edison. One day the four "vagabonds" were riding through the countryside in a model T. A mazda lamp had burned out and Ford stopped at a gas station to buy a new bulb. "By the way," he said to the owner of the station, "the man who invented the bulb is sitting out there in the car."

"You don't mean Thomas Edison?"

"Yes, I do." Ford's eyes roved to the rack behind the counter

where he noticed a number of Firestone tires. "And it might interest you to know that one of the other men in the car is Harvey Firestone."

"Do tell!"

"And *my* name," with a twinkle in the eye, "is Henry Ford."

"Glad to meet you, Mr. ——. Hey, hold on a minute. If you tell me that guy with the whiskers out there is Santa Claus, I'll call the sheriff!"

### VIII

HENRY FORD in his seventies. Thin white hair, high forehead, blue-gray eyes, thin face furrowed with thought, firm lips that readily relax into a smile, long sensitive fingers, plain inexpensive clothes, plain inexpensive tastes. His greatest pleasures were the pleasures of the home. The one red-letter day of his old age was his fiftieth wedding anniversary. Bridegroom of half a century of golden honeymoons. "It is probable," observed the *New York Herald Tribune* on this occasion, "that the Fords are the richest couple on earth. Whether that fact is more astonishing than their record of having remained married fifty years is a matter for debate. And they remain essentially simple people . . . they still dance with each other. It may be that, in more matters than one, they are the richest people in the world."

In the course of the celebration, Henry Ford submitted to a newspaper interview. "What," asked one of the reporters, "is your formula for a successful marriage?"

"The same as for a successful car," replied Ford. "Stick to one model."

A successful marriage, a fabulous portion of riches, and the common human cup of sorrow. A few years after the red-letter day came the black-letter day of his life. His only son, Edsel Ford, died.

But Henry Ford carried on. As in the First World War, he now turned all his resources and all his energy into helping his country

win the Second World War. His hatred of war had now matured into a hatred of aggression. Henry Ford was still true to his lifelong dream of peace. "What," he was asked, "do you think will come out of this war?"

"Out of this war," he replied, "will come the Great Awakening—the establishment of the Brotherhood of Man and the Federation of the World."